

...to build
a union...



TO BUILD A UNION

Comments on the Organization of Agricultural Workers

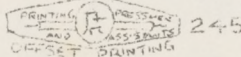
Henry Anderson

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DEDICATED TO FATHER THOMAS McCULLOUGH
AND TO ALL THE FARM WORKERS OF
THE UNITED STATES AND MEXICO
WHOM HE LOVES AND SERVES
SO WELL

For encouragement, advice, and assistance,
grateful acknowledgement is due many of my
colleagues and friends, including Norman
Smith, Director of the Agricultural Workers
Organizing Committee, AFL-CIO; Pat Bellamy,
Starry Krueger, Fred Cage, Jefferson Poland
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officers and members of the AWOC Northern
California Area Council.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. Introduction	1
II. What is a union?	2
III. What is "Organization"?	4
IV. What are the obstacles?	
A. Society at large	6
B. Natural conditions	7
C. The labor movement	8
D. The farm labor force	10
E. Agricultural employers and their allies	13
F. Political obstacles	16
V. Who shall be organized?	
A. Introduction	19
B. Foreign contract workers	23
C. Hired hands	23
D. Interstate migrants	23
E. Intrastate migrants	24
F. Transients and casuals	24
G. The home guard	25
VI. Where shall organizing be done?	
A. States and regions	26
B. Natural areas	26
C. Crop monopolies	27
D. Supply lines	27
E. In-the-area organizing	27
VII. When shall organizing be done?	29
VIII. Who shall do the organizing?	
A. Field representatives	30
B. Who shall lead?	31
IX. What kind of structure?	
A. The union	32
B. The organizing committee	35

X.	What Kind of Strategy?	
A.	What types of crops?	39
B.	What types of farms?	41
C.	Categories of workers	42
XI.	What Kind of Organizing Methods?	
A.	The need for unorthodoxy	43
B.	Local activities	44
C.	The helpers	46
XII.	The Organizing Committee: Positions and Functions	
A.	Director	49
B.	Deputy Director	50
C.	Director of Field Operations	50
D.	Director of Education and Training	50
E.	Director of Research	50
F.	Director of Office and Finance	51
G.	Department of Community Relations	51
XIII.	What Will It Cost?	55
XIV.	How Long Will It Take?	57
XV.	Support by Whom?	
A.	Amalgamated Meatcutters and Butcher Workmen	58
B.	United Packinghouse Workers of America	58
C.	International Brotherhood of Teamsters	58
D.	Industrial Union Department	59
E.	State labor federations	59
F.	Voluntary organizations	60
XVI.	Support With What Strings?	
A.	Autonomy or affiliation	61
B.	Justice <u>and</u> freedom	62
C.	Integrity	62
D.	Violence vs. non-violence	63
E.	The right to be heard	63
XVII.	Summary and conclusions	66

TO BUILD A UNION

I. Introduction

To build anything, one must have, in the beginning, a vision of what he wants to build and how he wants to build it. Before a bridgebuilder spans a chasm, he must know whether he wants to build a suspension bridge, a cantilever bridge, or some other type. Before an architect starts to design a building, he must have a clear image of what it is to be used for. He must know whether he is designing an office or an auditorium, a tavern or a temple. It makes a difference in building materials, size, style, everything.

To build a union, one must begin with a vision of what a union is -- or what he believes it might become. He must then carefully follow the implications and consequences of this vision as it leads through conclusions about union-builders, speed of construction, architectural style, and every other aspect of the union-building process. He must live in the real world as he pursues his vision. He will be influenced to an extent by the availability of materials, craftsmen, and other limitations. But the vision must come first.

In six years of continuous and intimate association with the problems of agricultural workers -- particularly in California's industrialized agriculture -- I have come to a number of conclusions. The first is that all the "problems of farm labor" are referrable, directly or indirectly, to disorganization. The second is that not just any kind of organization is an acceptable solution. In a moment, our discussion will begin with my conceptions of what a farm labor union ought to be and ought to do. This starting vision will be followed by discussion of the obstacles to be overcome, and the ways they might be overcome in building a union of agricultural workers.

These conclusions are my own. They do not necessarily reflect the views of the Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee, AFL - CIO, of which I am Research Director, nor of AWOC's Northern California Area Council, of which I am acting Chairman.

This paper is not an inflexible "blueprint". It is not the "one true way" to build a union in agriculture -- the last unorganized industry and the largest of them all. The primary purpose of this paper is to raise the kinds of questions with which any organizing drive in agriculture should grapple. I suggest a few answers. Others might be advanced. Some answers must be agreed upon by the builders in order to build a union.

II. What Is A Union?

In the minds of most Americans -- union members, union leaders, and the general public -- the word "union" stands for something mechanistic, materialistic, and limited. What they accept as "a union" is something like a vast vending machine which takes in coins at one end and periodically releases pre-packaged goods at the other. The union member is a purely passive bystander and has no understanding of or influence over the works behind the stainless steel or chromium facade of the vending machine. His money is taken from his pay, silently and antiseptically, by an IBM machine, and inserted as silently and antiseptically into the union mechanism, untouched by human hands, involvement, or volition.

The goods which come out of the vending machine type of union are standardized, narrowly limited in character, and predetermined -- again without the recipients' understanding, participation, or perhaps even his consent. But this is the way machines are. They do not think, nor are they capable of feeling. To a material impulse, a machine can yield only a material response.

Vending machine unionism has played a leading part in making this an affluent society. But just as surely as it has enriched men's pockets, it has failed to enrich their lives. It has failed to make men responsible. It has failed to help men become free. It has failed to help men overcome their loneliness. It has failed to help men know one another, trust one another, love one another. It has failed to help men know themselves, and to have confidence in their own ability to lead lives of meaning, self-direction, and integrity in a world which is frequently meaningless, enslaved, and corrupt.

In these respects, vending machine unionism is an extension of the times. Social institutions, originally, come into being to fill man's need for an orderly, meaningful life -- a life of constructive relationships with other men -- a life in which he can exercise some measure of control over the quality of his existence. But there is apparently something in the nature of our civilization which has led to a withering of these qualities. All our institutions have failed us in all these regards.

We are largely strangers to one another, and even to ourselves. Our lives are largely purposeless. We feel impotent to deflect in one direction or another the rush of events. We are trapped in a valley of granite monoliths which we never made, which we do not comprehend, but which overshadow us and bruise us by their very shadows.

Schools give us a pre-determined curriculum. Churches give us a pre-determined religion. Politics give us pre-determined candidates with pre-determined and identical commitments to violence, bigness, vulgarity, and compromise. Economic institutions give us assembly line jobs. Doctors give us assembly line medicine. Institutions for the use of leisure time give us assembly line sports, assembly line television, assembly line music, magazines, books, newspapers.

Where is the social institution which does not manipulate, dragoon, bully, shape, insinuate, lure, brainwash, or coerce man into something pre-determined, something from an assembly line, something he did not himself choose from among real alternatives? Where is the social institution which serves man rather than making of man a servant? Where is the social institution which is the creator of the times rather than their creature?

A union should be these things, should do these things. A union could be these things, could do these things. In terms of its own origins, in terms of its latent but still viable potentialities, the labor movement is the most likely starting point for a break from the vicious cycle of estrangement and brutalization in which we are caught. A union should and can make men free: give them meaningful control over at least some aspects of their lives. Liberation, once loosed, is contagious. Men who are really free in one respect will not be satisfied with captivity in any respect. They will demand some more influence over the education they receive, their entertainment, their politics, their religion, and everything else. And they will get it. For institutions can be changed by men, whenever and wherever men care enough.

But they change slowly. During the process, even a single institution which has begun to serve man can do much to counteract the dehumanization which may linger in other institutions. A union truly oriented toward human development and fulfillment not only could, but inevitably would, serve vital functions beyond the economic dimension. Such a union could hardly fail to provide opportunities for human beings to be political; for them to find joy together; for them to become educated, in a real sense, in a "curriculum" of their own devising; for them to be able to compensate, to an extent, for the ways they have been despoiled and disinherited by other institutions.

Admittedly, it is difficult to remold vending machine unions into such radically different images as these. A leading reason many people with a passion for humane unionism are attracted to the farm labor movement is that here it is possible to build without first destroying. There is a vacuum. There is no unionism at all. It is possible to begin with first principles, and to build constructively from the very outset -- to build something larger than a union as ordinarily conceived -- a union which serves man as man, man for himself, man as a being with economic needs, emotional needs, creative needs, intellectual needs, needs to be political, needs to have a faith, needs to be more than he was yesterday.

If this can be done among farm workers, other workers may begin to ask that it be done among them, too. If the labor movement becomes a movement again, in this way -- if it becomes a challenge and a corrective to the impoverishment and dehumanization of other social institutions -- other institutions must change to meet its challenge. Societies do change, and sometimes for the better. But the change must be begun by someone, someplace, at some point in time. That is why it is important, to everyone, to begin building a union -- a real union -- among farm laborers.

III. What Is "Organization"?

We have attempted to define the word, union, in operational terms. In a moment we shall consider in some detail the obstacles to organizing a farm labor union, where it might be organized, when, by what means, who shall be organized, who should do the organizing, and a number of other questions. But it is first necessary for us to define the second of the two fundamental terms we shall be using throughout our discussion: organizing. We need to examine this concept in relation to the concept of a union, as already defined.

Webster's Collegiate dictionary says that the verb, "organize", means "to arrange or constitute in interdependent parts, each having a special function or relation with respect to the whole." The noun, "organization," says Webster's, means a "vitally or systematically organic whole." What does this mean in terms of our organizational goal -- a union in which the participation of each member is as great as possible? It means that an authentic organizer would have to be something quite different from the common conception within the labor movement. An "organizer" is generally assumed to be anyone who wheedles, convinces, browbeats, or induces, in whatever way he can, workers to sign pledge cards or to vote a certain way in a certification election. These are individual acts. They do not give the worker a "special function" within an "organic whole." The typical union "organizer" may have a legitimate role, but he is not an organizer within our definition, since he leaves no interpersonal content behind him. An organizer, in the sense we mean, would involve each member as completely as possible in the decisions to be made. He would encourage the ability of each member or prospective to choose between the available alternatives. He would try to get the members working together as a "vital and systematic whole," but not as a monolith. Each should retain his identity as an "interdependent part," with a "special function or relation" to the others.

In other words, throughout this paper, when we refer to organizing farm workers, or building a farm workers' organization, we refer to the creation of meaningful, systematic, enduring sets of relationships between human beings. An organizer, as here understood, is a person skilled in bringing people together in such relationships.

If a representative of the Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee takes dues from a man, gives him a union book, and says goodbye to him with a reminder to send in his book and another \$2 next month, that worker has not been organized in any meaningful sense of the word. But if an AWOC representative introduces a man to some of his fellow farm workers, and they have a cup of coffee together, a process of real organization has begun. If we persuade a farm worker to attend a small meeting of his friends and neighbors, if we solicit his opinions on the issues before the meeting, if he volunteers to assist in carrying out one or more of the conclusions of the meeting, then the process of organization, in the proper sense, is well advanced. In the normal course of this process, dues will be paid and union books issued as a part of the individuals own feeling of involvement. The sequence is crucial.

If dues are collected first, involvement does not necessarily follow, and without the sense of involvement, payment of dues will soon stop. But if involvement comes first, dues follow, logically and almost inevitably. The vital point, therefore, is the involvement, which has all manner of desirable consequences and ramifications. Dues-collecting, by contrast, is not a vital point but a dead end, which has no ramifications in terms of human development, and usually does not even have any ramifications in terms of further dues, unless payment is compulsory (which it usually is).

How do you get people involved? Not by lecturing to them. Not by overwhelming them with the gravity of their "problem," or the nobility of your "cause." Not by parading your concern or your competence. You get them involved by finding out what they consider interesting and important and then making it possible for them to work on certain of these things which are within their power of accomplishment.

The first step in organizing meaningfully, then, is to find out what the people to be organized think about themselves, their work, and the world. The only way to find this out is to move among them with one's eyes and ears open. This process should not be forced or hurried. If you ask people, point-blank, in the manner of public opinion pollsters, "What are your principal problems?" you will get answers as stilted as those of pollsters, and no more useful. But in the course of some months, a sensitive participant-observer can learn a great deal about how people really feel about things. On the basis of this understanding, organizing in its more formal aspects may begin. We shall return to many of these organizational details in later sections of our discussion.

IV. What Are the Obstacles?

A. Society-at-large

1. Most consumers know ~~nothing~~ about the conditions under which their fruits and vegetables are produced, and have no desire to find out about these conditions -- in fact, will resist finding out. For it is disturbing to learn that prunes are picked up off the ground by little children working under the lash of a piece-rate system -- little children who become so driven within this system that their fingers continue to tense and reach and pluck in their sleep. It is disturbing to learn that most of America's salad vegetables are harvested by captive workers from Mexico who, being provided with no toilets, must relieve themselves in the lettuce, tomato, and celery fields. It is disturbing to learn that employees in the largest and most important industry in the country are denied access to virtually every social value we profess. To look even briefly under the tent of industrialized agriculture is disturbing. And most people do not like to be disturbed.

2. People complain about the high cost of living. Rent is paid only once a month. Automobile payments are paid only once a month. Insurance premiums are paid once a year. Doctor and hospital bills are paid irregularly. But food must be bought frequently, regularly, and must usually be paid for in cash. It is a convenient scapegoat. Many, perhaps most, American housewives blame the "high cost of living" primarily on food costs. One of the strongest arrows in the quiver of agricultural employers is their exploitation of this widespread consumers' attitude. Objectively, it is a very weak arrow indeed! Food is, in fact, disgracefully cheap in the United States: cheaper, proportionately to consumer income, than in almost any other country in the world. And growing proportionately cheaper all the time, as other costs -- such as medical care, for example -- skyrocket by comparison.

3. The spokesmen for agricultural employers also play skilfully upon most people's visceral response to the specter of "crops rotting in the fields." Through this cynical kind of legerdemain, a farm labor union is equated with food wastage -- and since waste of food is thought to be wicked, a farm labor union must be wicked, too. Hardly anyone looks behind the sleight-of-hand to learn that growers themselves destroy or leave unharvested millions of tons of fruit and vegetables every year, either to maintain a market price, or through sheer carelessness. Hardly anyone learns the even more important point that a contract with a responsible union is the best of all possible insurance against work stoppages at harvest time. It is much easier to react viscerally than rationally.

4. Most Americans do not want to relinquish the beautiful dream that agriculture is still a "way of life", a noble calling, rather than anything so crass as a business. They do not want to believe that their dream of agrarianism is almost totally contrary to the facts of agriculture in California and much of the rest of the country. They do not want to believe that there is such a thing as exploitation of agricultural workers -- or, indeed, that there are wage workers in agriculture at all. This form of sentimentality is carefully nurtured by the very growers who have gone the farthest toward killing the agrarian dream.

B. Natural conditions

1. Even in California, with its relatively benevolent climate, it is difficult to grow crops the year around in most of the state. In most of the rest of the country, it is impossible. Seasonality in agricultural employment is therefore dictated to a certain extent by Dame Nature. And seasonality of employment makes organization somewhat more difficult than it is in year-around industries. But it is easy to exaggerate the importance of this factor. In the first place, there is considerable employment, even when no crops are growing, because trees must be pruned, brush must be burned, tractors and other equipment must be maintained, fences must be repaired, and so forth. In the second place, many other industries are highly seasonal -- canning and preserving, fishing, lumbering, etc. -- and they have been organized. In the third place, the seasonality of employment in agriculture could be reduced through greater crop diversification, development of hardier strains of plants, and staggered plantings. These steps, however, will probably not be taken until the pressure of a union forces agricultural employers to rationalize their chaotic industry.

2. Within the life cycle of each crop, there are some times when more attention is required than others. Planting may have to be done by hand, or with only a minimum of mechanical assistance, as with strawberries and celery. Thinning and weeding, at least at the present stage of technological development, often must be done by hand. Most pruning still has to be done manually. Other crop-activities make for increases, followed by decreases, in labor requirements. The most dramatic of them, of course, is harvesting, which in many crops is still done today in essentially the same manner it has been done since the dawn of domesticated fruits and vegetables. It is difficult to foresee that within the proximate future hand harvesting will give way to mechanization or even semi-mechanization in crops which are particularly soft, which grow irregularly, or which mature at a differential pace so that judgment is required in picking. Growers argue that employment peaks and valleys are inherent in agriculture, and that the consequent instability of employment makes it impossible to attract a responsible (hence organizable) American labor force. In any one crop, peaks and valleys are inherent, but here, again, diversification within each crop-area would go far toward reducing this problem. And even assuming the problem remains to some extent, it can hardly be considered an insurmountable obstacle to the organizing of farm workers. There are similar peaks and valleys in the longshoring industry, for example. It has not been necessary to import foreign contract workers as longshoremen, because wages are good during the peaks and there are unemployment insurance and other benefits during the valleys.

3. Growers also argue that unionization is inapplicable to agriculture, due to the vagaries of precipitation, temperature, pests and disease. "We never know if we will have any crop at all," they complain. "How can we sign a contract with a union, binding us to anything?" These complaints perhaps seem plausible to the layman, who is not aware of the extent to which industrialized growers, through irrigation, insecticides, fertilizers, and other means, have achieved nearly complete mastery over nature. And to the extent that they have not, they have access to crop insurance under an agency of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, any time they care to use it.

C. The Labor Movement

1. The workers in agriculture can hardly be expected to organize without assistance from other unions, when workers in no other basic industry have been able to do so. The first question here is: "Does the labor movement want agricultural workers to have a union?" The question is not so obvious as it may at first sound. We do not mean a farm labor union in the sense of something tiny, struggling, something to be patronized and pitied. The sentimentalized view of the farm labor movement has done a good deal of harm. For in this view, responsibilities (if any) may be discharged by a donation of old clothes for farm workers, or a donation of some pittance -- \$5, or \$50, or even \$500,000. When we ask whether other workers want a farm labor union, we mean do they really want it. Do they want it enough to follow through all the consequences? What are their answers to such questions as the following?

a. Are they willing to pay for it? The agricultural employers in California alone have an estimated \$2,000,000 war chest to fight the organization of their employees. They could raise millions more if they thought they needed to. In its entire history, in scores of "drives" over more than four decades, the American labor movement has spent less than \$1,000,000 to organize farm workers. Are workers in organized industries willing to spend in realistic terms? A penny per worker per month would amount to approximately \$2,000,000 per year. A lot could be done with this amount. Are organized workers willing to pay it? Are their leaders willing to have them pay it?

b. Are other unions going to be willing to forego jurisdictional infighting in agriculture? Such infighting has badly hurt farm labor drives up to this point -- even before there were any spoils to fight over. When the time comes that it is evident 2,000,000 farm workers are at last actually going to be organized on an enduring basis, a number of international unions are going to find it hard to resist jurisdictional claims, old or new, real or imagined. Are they going to be able to resist the temptation? How badly does the labor movement want farm workers to have their own union?

c. Are other unions going to be willing to forego "politics as usual?" Are they going to be willing to forego, at least temporarily, some of the periodic increases in the benefits they get from their vending machines? Are they going to be willing to face up to the nature of the political-economic system as it now operates? Are they going to be willing to challenge it? Are they going to be willing to admit the truth to themselves and to everybody else? The truth is very unpleasant. It is this: there would be no National Labor Relations Act if the labor movement had not agreed to an agricultural exclusion; there would be no Federal wage and hour law -- and no periodic increases in the minimum wage -- if the labor movement had not been willing to accept an agricultural exclusion; there would be no child labor laws if the labor movement hadn't acquiesced in the exemption of child workers in agriculture; there would be no State unemployment insurance laws if the rest of the labor movement hadn't agreed to the exclusion of the one class of workers who need such insurance most. And so it has gone, through the enactment, re-enactment, and amendment of virtually all the social and labor legislation at both the federal and state levels during the past 28 years.

In the Senate of the United States, and even more conspicuously in most State senates, it has seemed to labor-oriented representatives that they could not get legislation through without the votes of some rural representatives. It has seemed they could not get these votes without exclusion of the one rural industry, agriculture. There is no recorded instance of organized labor being unwilling to make this compromise with political "realism." So long as these yearly, almost ritualized compromises continue, there may very well be no farm labor union. Is the labor movement willing to change the political style to which it has become accustomed? Is it willing, in California, for example, to forego an increase in the unemployment insurance schedule, and turn its lobbying apparatus toward the first serious effort in history to get unemployment insurance extended to industrialized agriculture?

d. Are urban unions, such as those in the building trades, willing to root out racial and ethnic discrimination from their assumptions and practices? Among its other evils, such discrimination dams up what would otherwise be a healthy rural-urban circulation, and forces many agricultural workers of minority races or ethnic groups to remain in rural areas where they may be in oversupply and hence underemployed. Or, even if Mexican-Americans, Filipino-Americans, Negroes, and others are in short supply in agriculture (as California growers claim), the fact that they have no place else to go blunts the edge of what would otherwise be their bargaining power. Through social prejudice, they are forced to remain in agriculture -- and compulsion always erodes labor standards as well as other human values. Craft unions are obviously not the only force which practices social discrimination. But there is no better place to start uprooting discrimination. Are they willing to do it?

e. Is the labor movement prepared for the long pull? Even more than massive assistance, agricultural workers need assured assistance in their union-building. Like foreign countries in their technological assistance projects, farm workers need to know that aid which is granted this year will not be withdrawn next year. The task of building a union from the very beginning always takes a long time. It will take a particularly long time in agriculture. Is the labor movement going to demand immediate, tangible results? Is it willing to be patient, to take the long view, to be content with gradual and subtle accomplishments?

2. So far we have been asking whether the labor movement is willing to make the first serious commitment in history to the building of a farm workers' union. Let us assume that it is. A question remains as to whether it is able. We do not refer here to financial support or any of the other matters discussed above. The labor movement is able, at these levels. But at least as much as financial assistance, the farm labor movement needs technical assistance. It needs technicians who have actually organized the unorganized in the face of obstacles roughly analogous to those in agriculture today. Where are these organizers? Are they still young enough to go through the meat-grinder again? What are they doing now? Are they still in the labor movement? If so, have they been able to retain their fire within the smothering embrace of vending machine unionism?

Or, consider another kind of technical assistance. The farm labor movement needs political assistance, rendered with both sensitivity and forcefulness, acumen and power. Is organized labor able to deliver this kind of help? Does the labor movement have a political arm which is insightful and effective? The "score sheets" which labor's legislative departments issue periodically may sometimes seem to indicate substantial accomplishment, in matters which come to a vote in Washington, D.C., or some state legislature. But they are not so impressive if one takes into account the vital issues which not only never come to a vote, but which never even reach the level of discussion.

D. The farm labor force

The following is an attempt at a candid evaluation of the characteristics of the agricultural labor force which affect its organizability. It is not the purpose of this analysis either to praise or to blame, but to state the way things are -- things which must be taken into account by any well-considered effort to build a farm workers' union.

1. Farm workers are heterogeneous.

a. There are gulfs between the self-employed (working farmers and unpaid family workers), the quasi-self-employed (sharecroppers and tenant farmers), and hired farm workers.

b. There are gulfs between various categories of hired farm workers: year-around hired hands; interstate migrants; intrastate migrants; stable seasonal workers; casual seasonal workers; foreign contract workers; and others.

c. There are gulfs between the farm workers to whom it is a source of livelihood, and the housewives, students, and others to whom it is no more than a source of extra spending money.

d. There are gulfs between the farm workers in various specializations. Ladder workers have little contact with row-crop or "stoop" workers. Shed workers have little contact with field workers. Dairy workers have little contact with livestock workers, and neither have any contact with fruit and vegetable workers. Grain workers, poultry workers, all the many specializations, are isolated from one another in vital respects.

e. Farm workers are separated from one another by barriers of citizenship, race, culture, language, religion, national origin, and virtually every other artificial barrier known to or devised by man. These barriers are purposefully perpetuated by agricultural employers, as, for example, in their demanding and receiving exclusion of most farm workers from California's Fair Employment Practices Act of 1959.

2. Farm workers are widely dispersed.

a. They are widely dispersed while at work, compared to workers in most other industries. In other industries, it would not be unusual for 6,000 workers to be employed in a plant covering less than a square mile. In the San Joaquin County asparagus harvest, 6,000 workers are employed in fields covering nearly 100 square miles -- about one worker per ten acres.

b. Farm workers tend to be widely dispersed off the job, too. Agricultural employers have actively discouraged farm labor camps -- such as those the Farm Security Administration built in the late 1930's -- since such physical settings make it relatively easy for workers to get together. The only large farm labor camps which remain, at least in California, are bracero camps, and the bracero system contains many built-in guarantees against worker organization. Domestic agricultural workers tend to live in small and scattered "shoestring settlements", in individual units on the farm, in trailer courts, on ditch banks, in cheap hotels, or on the bum. The closest thing to farm workers' communities or neighborhoods are the "shoestring settlements" -- but even here one might have to go to three or four shacks before finding a farm laborer's family, since they are mixed with the aged, the disabled, and others who have to try to live on \$100 a month or less.

c. Furthermore, there is no "funnel" through which farm workers pass on their way from their dispersed places of residence to their dispersed places of work, or back. There are no gathering points. There is nothing analogous to a factory gate. The closest thing to it in California is a skid-row shape-up, operated here and there in the Central Valley by farm labor contractors. However, as we shall have occasion to observe later, there are several reasons why these shape-ups do not assist materially in overcoming the logistic problem of geographic dispersion of the farm labor force.

3. Farm workers are mobile.

a. Many farm workers are mobile geographically. They are usually called migrants, although that word has an emotional freight which is sometimes not justified by the facts. It is also an error to assume that most farm workers are migrants. Most are not, at least in the usual sense. (We shall return to this point.) But a good many move across state lines. Even more move across county lines in following the crops within a given state such as California. And if we use the phrase "mobile geographically" in its widest sense, then we must say that a great many farm workers are more or less constantly in motion. Only the year-around hired hands are not. A "seasonal domestic" (to use the terminology of the California Farm Placement Service), living in the Dogpatch area of San Joaquin County, might well work on twelve or fifteen ranches in the course of a year. A Mexican bracero might well work on nearly as many in the course of a six-week contract.

b. Many farm workers are mobile not only in space but in time. They are farm workers today, but tomorrow they are not farm workers: they are out of the farm labor market, because they have returned to homemaking, to school, to cannery jobs, or to something else. The day after tomorrow, figuratively speaking, they may be farm workers again. This kind of shifting back and forth, no less than geographical shifting, constitutes a formidable problem to union builders.

c. Many farm workers are mobile psychologically, and to some extent sociologically. In terms of its influence on organizability, this is an even more serious problem than either of the foregoing forms of mobility. Many-- perhaps most -- farm workers feel no permanent attachment to their industry. Why should they? It offers them no security, no self-respect, no opportunity for advancement. They may well end by spending their entire lives in farm

labor -- but they never quite accept this, or believe that it is going to happen. They are continually on the alert for some way out, which may or may not ever present itself. Farm labor, too, may be a stopping off place for workers temporarily displaced from other industries. I recently talked with a group of pottery workers who were on strike. I was told that many of them were working in the fields to supplement their strike benefits. They complained bitterly about farm workers crossing their picket lines, but failed to see that their casual entry into the farm labor market could have any untoward effect upon persons already in that labor market. It is fairly common practice, too, for cannery workers and others to supplement their unemployment insurance benefits by working in the fields, with similar untoward effects upon serious farm workers. (This is illegal, but common nonetheless.) Farm labor, then, is seldom viewed as a life work. It is a springboard, or a refuge. Under present conditions, it is an end-point only for the beaten, the weary, or the hopeless.

The importance of this point cannot be overemphasized. Lack of attachment to an industry leads, almost inevitably, to lack of attachment to the other workers in that industry. It is largely in vain to exhort a man to "stand by his fellow workers," to "stick together," to "build for next year," when he has no intention of staying in farm labor next year, or so much as a single day more than he can help.

4. Many farm workers are unfamiliar with American concepts and assumptions about basic rights, fair play, and what is tolerable and what is intolerable. To some extent this is due to lack of education, and general isolation from the mainstreams by which social values are communicated. To a larger extent it is due to agricultural employers' purposeful selection of workers from cultural settings in which docility has survival value. Negro farm workers from the South, and Mexican farm workers -- whether braceros or first-generation immigrants -- tend to have this in common: they have come to look upon a patrón, or paternalistic employer, as their only hope for justice in this life. Justice, in this view, is not a right which can be won by one's own efforts. Justice is a privilege, which, if one is lucky, may be parcelled out in small amounts now and then, and if one is unlucky may be withheld forever. In either event, it is out of one's hands. Whether one will get a good or bad patrón is in the hands of fate. Fatalism, obviously, is not conducive to militancy. It has been said that when workers become angry, they are more than organizable -- they cannot be kept from organizing -- but until they become angry, they are unorganizable. Many farm workers are still willing to tolerate conditions which would be intolerable to any other workers in the United States. There is some reason to believe they are growing more restive. But relatively few are fighting mad, yet. Those who do get angry are usually "picked off" in one way or another. The docility of those who remain is continually reinforced by infusions of newcomers from Mexico and other foreign countries, and from Southern plantations. Until docility is replaced by outrage and passion, the organization of agricultural workers will remain, at best, difficult.

5. Many farm workers are unfamiliar with unions, or, for that matter, with any type of organization in which people band themselves together for the accomplishment of a mutually desired goal. Many farm workers, indeed, belong to no groups of any kind. Those who do, tend to be limited in their organizations to "other worldly" and purely social types of associations.

Man may be born with an instinct for gregariousness, but this instinct is not for gregariousness of any special type -- such as a union. A union of the type we are proposing is in many ways a very demanding form of association: something to which men are made, not **born**. It is asking a great deal to ask that agricultural workers who may have had no experience even with undemanding forms of human organization step directly into so highly advanced a form. (We shall return to this point.)

E. Agricultural Employers and their Allies

1. Over the period of a full century, California growers have so successfully evaded the usual responsibilities of employers that they now feel they have an inviolable right to be irresponsible. Their basic irresponsibility assumes such forms as the following.

a. Reliance upon farm labor contractors to recruit, transport, supervise, and pay workers. However, the principal service of these intermediaries is to create and perpetuate confusion as to who is, in fact, the employer.

b. Insistence that government agencies guarantee a constant oversupply of labor. (See discussion of political obstacles, below.)

c. Use of the piece rate system of payment, without a wage floor. Under this system, the employer is under no obligation to calculate his labor requirements accurately. His labor costs are the same whether he keeps 50 men employed full time, or 100 men underemployed. Too, the piece rate system as utilized in agriculture enables the employer to avoid any responsibility for selecting or training his employees. Once again, his labor costs are exactly the same whether the crop is harvested by efficient, experienced, qualified workers who may be able to earn something near a living wage, or by children, inexperienced foreign nationals, physical and emotional cripples, or others who may be able to earn only a dollar or two a day under the "prevailing" piece rate.

d. A general denial of responsibility for the welfare of employees and their families during employment season, and a near-absolute denial of such responsibility when the harvest is done. In the case of braceros, the workers are thrown back to a foreign country. In the case of migrants, the workers, with their health, educational, welfare, and other problems, are returned to another county or another state, out of sight and out of mind. In the case of local seasonal workers, such problems are passed on to county hospitals, county relief programs, and the like -- which is to say, the taxpayers of the community at large. This abdication of employers' responsibilities is compounded by the preferential tax rates which industrialized growers enjoy in most areas.

e. With an unlimited reservoir of cheap, tractable labor available at any time; without the necessity to train this labor force; without any responsibilities to it after the season; indeed, without the necessity of any dealings at all with a great, faceless, helpless, unprotesting, unprotected commodity called "labor", agricultural employers in California and other industrialized farming states have indulged themselves in wild, irrational, and speculative business practices long since abandoned in every other industry. To a very great extent, fruit and vegetable growers plant, harvest,

and market without serious regard for buyer demand, existing backlogs, production in other areas, or other rudimentary business considerations. They may not make much money for three or four years, but then "things break right," and they "make a killing." This kind of chaos would be impossible if agricultural workers, rather than remaining pawns to the growers' gambling fever, were collectively to demand an end to insecurity and instability.

f. With relatively few exceptions, growers have likewise been able to evade the responsibility of organizing themselves in constructive and needed ways: e.g., producers' cooperatives or other types of associations through which they could bargain on an equitable basis with Libby-McNeil-Libby, Safeway Stores, and the other processing and distribution giants who have to date enjoyed an almost unchecked hand in setting the prices producers receive. Growers have been able to survive in this kind of jungle only because their employees were even more disorganized than they. Once again, if farm workers were effectively to demand an end to their own jungle existence, agricultural employers would have to take some long-overdue steps toward bringing order into their own house.

g. Given a perpetually overflowing labor reservoir, for which they have been required to exercise no responsibility in the off-season (and very little in-season), fruit and vegetable growers¹ have been able to indulge themselves in single-cropping, and to avoid the diversification which would go far toward reducing the insecurity of agricultural employment.

h. Cheap and malleable labor is the best of all possible inhibitors of mechanization. Fruit and vegetable producers have not adopted nearly the number of labor-saving devices they could have and would have in the absence of their overflowing reservoir of disadvantaged workers. Some mechanization, however, has taken place and is taking place. By comparison with that of agricultural employers, the attitude of automobile manufacturers, meat packers, and other industrialists toward the human consequences of automation has been the very model of responsibility. The operator of a mechanical cotton picker, which does the work of about 40 hand pickers, is paid hardly more than he could make picking by hand. And the 39 pickers who have been displaced? They fight for the few jobs which remain: picking in the corners of fields, scrapping, picking for quality. An ideal state of affairs for the employers,^{and} obviously the reason wages for hand pickers are lower today than they were fifteen years ago in Fresno, Tulare, Kings and Kern Counties.

2. At the same time that fruit and vegetable growers are largely disorganized and impotent in ways which could be useful to their industry, they are highly organized, ruthless, and powerful in negative and destructive ways.

a. California is aswarm with labor-busting growers' organizations, which, as indicated earlier, are estimated to have immediate resources of at least \$2,000,000, and almost unlimited additional resources if the time ever

1 Throughout this discussion, we are talking about fruit and vegetable growers primarily, since they employ the great majority of hired farm laborers, are the most irresponsible of agricultural employers, and the most viciously anti-labor.

comes when the arbiters of such things feel they are needed. Anywhere farm workers show any signs of trying to improve their lot, these labor-busting organizations move in with their full apparatus. For example, in October, 1961, approximately 200 Brussels sprout pickers in Santa Cruz County banded themselves together and asked for \$1.25 an hour and other improvements. It was not the Santa Cruz Brussels sprout growers who fought off these ruinous requests. The Council of California Growers, created in 1959 to combat AWOC, sent in a covey of public relations men who conducted the sprout growers' publicity, recruitment of strikebreakers, and every other aspect of their campaign.

b. In the 1930's growers broke strikes by breaking heads. Now they have found that it is possible to accomplish the same ends by more genteel means. Even Associated Farmers, Inc., which in the 1930's had its own storm troopers and other appurtenances of native fascism, has joined the public relations trend. Growers' groups now buy three-fourths page ads in metropolitan newspapers explaining what a wonderful institution the bracero program is for everyone. They buy billboards the length and breadth of California, with pictures of honest-faced, ruggedly handsome farmers, and the legend, "Source of the Staff of Life." They hire "p.r." men who have never been near a farm, but who are personable and charming as they tell service clubs, ladies' organizations, and others, how kind California growers are to their workers, despite the fact they (the growers) are losing so much money every year.

c. Agriculture is the last industrial open shop. As such, it is regarded with nostalgia and affection by those who have never quite been able to accept the disappearance of the open shop in other industries. Therefore, corporation farmers receive assistance from a wide variety of outside sources in their crusade to preserve agricultural workers from the damnation of unionism. Twenty years ago, the LaFollette Committee demonstrated that almost none of the contributions to Associated Farms, Inc., had come from bona fide farmers, but had come from railroad companies, utility companies, canneries, and other corporate sources. There is no reason to doubt that much of the support for today's agricultural labor-busting fronts is coming from these same kinds of sources. In return, the growers' groups are at the disposal of broader anti-labor forces, whenever the occasion may arise. In California in 1958, for example, agricultural employers were at the very forefront of an effort to pass a State "right-to-work" law.

d. Perhaps the most dramatic displays of ^{California} industrialized growers' power take place every two years in the halls and hearing rooms of the Capitol building in Sacramento. In 1959, growers' lobbyists were not content to kill minimum wage and collective bargaining bills. In a brutal, cynical, and capricious piece of muscle-flexing, they tacked on a last-minute rider to a Fair Employment Practices bill about to clear the State Senate. They got the usual agricultural exclusion. In 1961, these lobbyists easily squashed the minimum wage and collective bargaining bills again, and began looking about for other ways to keep in practice. For two years, the California Department of Public Health had been studying scandals in field sanitation and had finally prepared a bill with very limited provisions for portable toilets, drinking water, and hand-washing facilities. It was an extremely weak bill, but it afforded the growers' lobbyists another opportunity. They killed it in the Senate Finance Committee, without even the

formality of a debate. Grower lobbyists hardly trouble themselves with the state Assembly. Everything they desire can be accomplished with much less time and trouble in the Senate, where a rural senator who won office with a total of 3,496 votes can cancel out the senator from Los Angeles County who won his seat with 1,409,469 votes.

e. Industrialized growers have power. This, in itself, is not particularly remarkable. A great many groups in our society have a great deal of power. Society, in a sense, may be defined as a way of distributing power. What is remarkable in the case of corporation farmers is that there is no countervailing power, as there is in virtually every other instance of power distribution in our society. No better example of the absence of countervailing power in agriculture may be cited than the manner in which wages are set. The managers of a growers' area organization, such as the Imperial Valley Farmers Association, or a commodity organization, such as the San Joaquin Tomato Growers Association, recommend a wage rate in advance of the season. Say, 70¢ an hour, which prevailed throughout the 1950's in the Imperial Valley, or 11¢ per 50 pound box, which prevailed in tomato harvests during the same period. The grower-members of these associations rarely if ever question the recommendations of their managers. These recommendations become an accepted fact before a single tomato has been picked or a single head of lettuce cut. The California Department of Employment solemnly certifies them as the "prevailing rate" and turns its tax-supported farm labor offices over to the recruitment of domestic workers at these rates. The U.S. Department of Labor solemnly certifies the growers' wishes as the "prevailing rate" and begins recruiting braceros to fill the spurious labor shortages which such rates create. There are no wage changes during the season. If the workers don't like it -- they will be replaced by workers who are even hungrier than they.

Unilateral wage fixing -- not to mention unilateral fixing of working conditions and every other aspect of employment -- has become so deeply engrained in California agriculture over a period of one hundred years that growers consider it one of their basic human rights. It is, in a way, morally shocking to them for anyone to suggest that conditions should be determined multilaterally. The very concept of countervailing power is totally alien to their experiences and values. This must be counted among the reasons growers will fight unionism so hard and so irrationally: it is, among other things, a holy crusade to preserve an accustomed (and hence right) way of life against the incursions of things that are new and strange (and hence wrong). It is utterly futile for us or for anyone else to say that this is not the way it should be -- that this is not the way men should behave. It is the way men do behave. And it is a major obstacle to the organization of agricultural workers.

F. Political Obstacles to Organization of Farm Workers

Most farm workers are either totally disenfranchised -- by lack of U.S. citizenship, or inability to meet residency requirements -- or disenfranchised in effect by lack of education, language problems, or general isolation from the society-at-large and its politics. Agricultural employers suffer none of these disabilities, but are quite well prepared to vote for what they consider to be their interests. Thus it is that in areas where

hired farm laborers may outnumber growers as much as ten to one, grower-oriented candidates are consistently elected. And thus it is that farm workers labor under a burden of politically-imposed handicaps absolutely unique in our society.

Agricultural workers are badly hurt by their exclusion from unemployment insurance. They are hurt by their exclusion from workmen's compensation laws in most states. Many of them are hurt by their de facto exclusion from Old Age and Survivor's Insurance. They are hurt by their exclusion from child labor laws.

They are badly hurt by their exclusion from wage and hour laws. They are hurt by their exclusion from other social legislation, both state and federal. These exclusions cut two ways. They hurt the farm worker materially. They also hurt his self-respect. They say to him, in effect, "It is the considered judgment of society that you are not as deserving as other workers." This does destructive things to a person's morale, and when morale declines, organizability declines.

More than by any of the above exclusions, farm workers are desperately hurt by a unique inclusion. Their industry is the only one in which the importation of foreign contract labor is permitted. Public Law 78 -- the bracero law -- passed by Congress in 1951, and currently in force until December 31, 1963, not only permits the importation of Mexican contract workers in agriculture, but requires the U.S. Department of Labor to import them when growers create "labor shortages" by freezing wages at intolerable levels and discouraging domestic workers in the thousand and one ways at their disposal. Public Law 78 is an open invitation to labor-busting, and its possibilities have not been lost on the corporation farmers of California and other states. Some long-time observers of the farm labor scene feel that it is pointless to attempt to organize farm workers so long as Public Law 78, or any equivalent, remains on the books. This viewpoint gains added thrust when Public Law 78 is administered venally, incompetently, or with prejudice. Which it sometimes is.

Farm workers have been badly hurt by the vicissitudes of state and federal administrators, who evidently have no convictions, but are quite willing to point whichever way they think the strongest wind is blowing. With the exception of local representatives of the California Department of Employment and U.S. Department of Labor, who are often predictably anti-domestic, farm workers have nothing they can count on from the executive agencies. A favorable interpretation today is offset by an unfavorable one tomorrow. This, one imagines, is supposed to pass for "objectivity."

Farm workers have been hurt, too, by the politics of police power and of the judicial branch of the government. The municipal and superior courts in many of California's rural counties are, for all practical purposes, simply extensions of the local growers' associations when it comes to farm labor cases. In the whole history of AWOC, so far as we know, no growers' application for ^{an} anti-AWOC injunction or restraining order was ever rejected in one of these courts. The courts were equally amenable to permitting themselves to be used in a variety of ill-founded and harassing lawsuits against, and arrests of, AWOC officers and members.

-18-

V. Who Shall be Organized?

A. Introduction

Among those who are sympathetic toward farm labor, but essentially uninitiated in its complexities, misconceptions abound. Some think that the farm labor problem in California is synonymous with "the Mexican problem"... Some think that the farm labor problem is synonymous with "the migrant problem". Others have other fixed ideas about farm laborers and the farm labor problem. Underlying all these misconceptions is the assumption that a farm worker is a farm worker is a farm worker. He is a Mexican. Or he is an Okie. Or he is a migrant. Or he is a hired hand. Or he is something else.

No one is going to be able to build a farm workers' union on the basis of impressions so far from the truth. The truth is that there are farm workers and farm workers -- and farm workers. We have already mentioned some of the types in an earlier section. Some of the categories are man-made and artificial and need not concern us here. But some of the categories differ widely one from another with regard to their aspirations, their status, their grievances, and almost everything else.

The first question is: can these disparate types be organized simultaneously? Under two conditions, this question might conceivably be answered "yes". It could be done if the "organizing" by-passed the workers themselves, and through some form of irresistible pressure forced entire sections of the agricultural industry to sign contracts almost overnight. In such a manner, the Teamsters might well be able to blanket in all the workers in the tomato industry, for example, or all the workers in the peach industry. Such major commodity groups are subject to enormous pressure from the Teamsters in two ways: they are dependent on trucks to haul most of their production over-the-road; they are dependent on canneries to process most of their production. Teamsters have both over-the-road drivers and cannery workers under contract already.

Given the conception of a union discussed at the outset of this paper, however, such an approach to "organizing" is unacceptable, even assuming it could be carried out without the intervention of injunctions, emergency legislation, etc.

The only other way it might be possible to organize all of the agricultural workers at once is to conduct what would amount to a number of parallel organizing drives at one time. This seems out of the question in view of the inability of the AFL - CIO's "most serious campaign in history" to gain adequate support even for one type of drive, and in a limited geographic area at that.

It appears that organizing across-the-board must be ruled out as either undesirable or unfeasible. The question then becomes, "Is there some logical sequence in which the several types of farm workers might be organized?" At this point, let us review briefly the types of workers who make up the hired farm labor force in a typical industrialized farming area such as San Joaquin County, or Fresno County, California. For our present purposes, the principal categories are as follows:

1. Foreign contract workers. Almost all Mexican Nationals. A few Japanese Nationals, and Basques.

2. Year-around "hired hands". Usually live on the ranch or close to it. Maintenance men, equipment operators, dairy and livestock workers, etc.

3. Interstate migrants. Some Anglos from as far away as the Midwest; but mostly of Mexican ancestry, from Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas. As of the last two years, may be sub-divided between permanent residents of the United States and "green card" immigrants from Mexico who leave their families in the old country and return there periodically.

4. Intrastate migrants. Mainly fruit workers. Many Anglos who winter in the southern end of the San Joaquin Valley; many Mexican-Americans who winter in Los Angeles, San Bernardino, Imperial Counties, etc.

5. Casual. Mostly Anglos; almost all unattached males. Obtain jobs through shape-ups in cities such as Sacramento, Oakland, Stockton, Fresno, etc. Work only on a day-to-day basis.

6. "The home guard." These workers live in the same area the year around, but are differentiated from hired hands, in that they work for a number of different growers each year, and in their characteristic living arrangements. Members of the "home guard" usually live in rural slums, or urban fringe slums, rather than in grower-maintained housing.

In the following table¹ may be seen the numerical distribution of these types of workers in the total farm labor force of California for the year 1960. (Since breakdown between transients and home guard was not available, these have been combined into a category, "local seasonal". As we may deduce from subsequent tables, however, almost all of these are, in fact, the home guard.)

Table 1

MAN-WEEKS OF HIRED FARM LABOR, BY TYPE OF WORKER,
NUMBER AND PERCENT, CALIFORNIA, 1960

Type of worker	Man-weeks	
	Number	Percent
TOTAL	14,848,840	100.0
Year-around	6,097,714	41.1
Seasonal domestic, total	6,553,714	44.1
Local seasonal	4,979,101	33.5
Intrastate migrants	1,085,750	7.3
Interstate migrants	488,863	3.2
Foreign contract	2,197,606	14.8

1. This and the following series of tables was compiled from unpublished and unassimilated data from the California Department of Employment, Division of Research and Statistics.

Statewide data, however, are somewhat misleading, since they cover up very wide differences in the composition of the farm labor force from county to county. In the following two tables, for example, may be found the make-up of the total hired farm labor force in two of the leading agricultural counties in California and the nation: Fresno and San Joaquin. It will be noted how heavily San Joaquin County growers use foreign contract labor, and how relatively slightly Fresno County growers use this type of labor.

It will be noted, too, that here we have a breakdown of the "local seasonal" force into "home guard" and "casual". The casual workers in these cases are those who obtain their employment through shape-ups operated in Fresno and Stockton, respectively. These data actually overstate the importance of casuals in the farm labor forces of the two counties. We know, for example, that many of the casuals who obtain jobs in the Stockton shape-up are transported to Contra Costa, Stanislaus, or other counties to work. Since this breakdown is not available, however, we had to include them all in the San Joaquin County figures. We also had to assume that the average day or work week for all types of farmworkers contains the same number of hours. Although data on this point have never been collected, it is common knowledge that casuals frequently work shorter days and shorter weeks than do stabler types of workers.

Table 2

MAN-WEEKS OF HIRED FARM LABOR, BY TYPE OF WORKER,
NUMBER AND PERCENT, FRESNO COUNTY, 1960

Type of Worker	Man-weeks	
	Number	Percent
TOTAL	2,162,610	100.0
Year-around	936,140	43.3
Seasonal domestic, total	1,206,130	55.8
Home guard	995,035	46.0
Casual	15,565	0.7
Intrastate migrants	139,130	6.4
Interstate migrants	56,400	2.6
Foreign contract	29,340	0.9

Table 3

MAN-WEEKS OF HIRED FARM LABOR, BY TYPE OF WORKER,
NUMBER AND PERCENT, SAN JOAQUIN COUNTY, 1960

Type of Worker	Man-weeks	
	Number	Percent
TOTAL	998,840	100.0
Year-around	265,140	26.5
Seasonal domestic, total	570,351	57.1
Home guard	320,777	32.1
Casual	30,483	3.1
Intrastate migrants	177,291	17.7
Interstate migrants	41,800	4.2
Foreign contract	163,349	16.4

Finally, let us examine comparable data from Tulare and Kern Counties, two more ^{of the} leading agricultural counties in the nation. It will be noted that the patterns here ^{even} are different from those of either Fresno or San Joaquin Counties, with ^{even} heavier reliance on local seasonal workers.

Table 4

MAN-WEEKS OF HIRED FARM LABOR, BY TYPE OF WORKER,
NUMBER AND PERCENT, TULARE COUNTY, 1960

Type of Worker	Man-weeks	
	Number	Percent
TOTAL	945,840	100.0
Year-around	348,290	36.8
Seasonal domestic, total	593,080	62.7
Local seasonal	505,860	53.5
Intrastate migrants	53,430	5.6
Interstate migrants	33,790	3.6
Foreign contract	4,470	0.5

Table 5

MAN-WEEKS OF HIRED FARM LABOR, BY TYPE OF WORKER,
NUMBER AND PERCENT, KERN COUNTY, 1960

Type of worker	Man-weeks	
	Number	Percent
TOTAL	921,820	100.0
Year-around	393,400	42.7
Seasonal domestic, total	522,880	56.7
Local seasonal	424,530	46.1
Intrastate migrants	52,330	5.7
Interstate migrants	46,020	4.9
Foreign contract	5,540	0.6

From these data, it is apparent that the question, "Who shall be organized" must be answered, in part, by the conditional reply, "It depends upon what area you're talking about." This is one of the reasons it is difficult to mount a farm labor organizing drive which functions simultaneously in such counties as those above, and in Southern California, where the use of braceros is much greater, and in Northern California, where employment patterns are different still.

None of this is intended to suggest that it is necessary, desirable, or possible for any farm labor organizing drive to concentrate solely upon any particular type of farm workers, or that any type should be ignored. It is a question of emphasis forced upon us by financial and other realities. Where might the major emphasis be placed to best advantage, particularly in the early phases of the drive? Some of the leading arguments may be summarized as follows.

B. Foreign Contract Workers.

If their contracts were taken seriously by anyone concerned, braceros might, paradoxically enough, prove the most organizable of any element in the farm labor force. Braceros are the only class of farm workers in America who have a guarantee of the right of electing representatives. Article 21 of the Migrant Labor Agreement between Mexico and the United States contains such a guarantee, and, what is more, this article has been interpreted by the two governments to include the right to representation by "any legitimate and bona fide labor organization." The international treaty goes on to say "the employer must recognize such representatives as spokesmen for the workers." Unfortunately, this section of the treaty is ignored or subverted by employers and government enforcement agencies even more cynically than most of the other paper guarantees to which braceros are theoretically entitled. In practice, we have to say that the bracero program is administered in such a way as to make these workers unorganizable.

In San Joaquin County within the past month, for example, braceros who have said they wanted the AWOC to represent them, and have even signed authorizations to this effect, have been threatened with immediate repatriation to Mexico -- and these threats have been upheld by both the Mexican consul and the local "compliance officer" of the U.S. Department of Labor.

If the program were administered in any other way, it would undoubtedly be abolished by bracero-users themselves, and some program with built-in unorganizability would be erected in its place. The Japanese National program, for example, is always available on a standby basis.

C. Hired Hands.

The principal argument in favor of concentrating upon these farm workers is that they occupy particularly crucial positions within the industry. There would be no dairy, livestock, or poultry industries at all without permanent workers. There would be no crops for seasonal harvest hands to pick if there were no year-around workers to keep the machinery in working order, prepare the land, plant the seeds, fertilize, spray, irrigate, and the like. The principal argument against concentrating upon permanent employees, at least at the outset, is that they identify much more closely with management than any other class of farm workers. They enjoy the fruits of paternalism. Most have risen from seasonal or migrant to year-around status, and are wholly dependent upon the whims of the employer for continued enjoyment of their present status. Few are likely to sacrifice their imagined blessings by any sort of union participation -- at least, in the union's early stages.

D. Interstate Migrants.

"Okies" and other Anglo migrants are often highly knowledgeable and militant union material. The disadvantage of trying to build a union around them is that they rarely remain in any one crop-area more than a month. Texas-Mexicans and "green-card" workers pose this same problem of geographical instability, plus a host of others as well: unfamiliarity with unionism; unfamiliarity with the English language; the cultural heritage of the patron system; etc. Another characteristic of many interstate migrants which poses a problem to organizers is that most of them come from states where agricultural

wages are much lower than they are in California. To a Texas migrant, who is accustomed to getting 50¢ an hour at home, \$1.00 an hour, or even 70¢ an hour, seems munificent. It is difficult for him to understand why people earning such munificent wages should want to ask for \$1.25 an hour.

E. Intrastate Migrants.

Many of these workers travel the same circuit year after year, have come to know one another, and form a viable basis for "traveling locals" which return to the same home base for a significant portion of each season. One of the arguments against a pre-occupation with this group is that it tends to be somewhat exclusive and aristocratic -- limiting itself to ladder work and looking down, literally and figuratively, on other types of agricultural employment. Another argument against such a preoccupation is that this group is probably not numerically large enough to be decisive to the industry even if it were wholly organized. Thirdly, there is the same structural problem one faces with any type of migrants: can a "traveling local" service and sustain itself without permanent locals in each of the various areas into which the travelers move?

F. Transients and casuals.

Skid row shape-ups represent the closest parallel to a hiring hall or a "funnel" which exists anywhere in agriculture at the present time. It is possible to reach more casuals in a shorter period of time with handbills; etc., than is possible among other types of farm workers. Some observers also feel that the extreme mobility of the skid row transient farm worker, is an asset rather than a liability to organization. They argue that the transient acts as a "grapevine", and quickly passes the word up and down the state as to the union's activities and purposes. The arguments against an emphasis on skid row shape-ups, however, are formidable. Most of these workers are more or less severely damaged psychologically, are running away from something, and have lost whatever self-confidence they may once have had. Most cannot be relied upon to pass along accurate messages, to show up for work from one day to the next, to do anything else. This is not to say they should be written off the human ledger, But it is to say a union faced with almost insurmountable problems of other types can hardly survive if it tries to serve as a psychiatric ward, alcoholism clinic, and vocational rehabilitation agency. Skid row transients should receive therapy and should be rehabilitated, to be sure. But not by the industry of agriculture, nor by a farm labor union. The job is one for the society which damaged these men in the first place.

Another argument which must be raised against a preoccupation with transient single males is that their contacts "along the line" are almost entirely limited to other transient single males. They have little contact with family migrants, and even less with the home guard. "The word" does not really spread through this means, but goes around and around in the same circle -- a very limited circle.

Which suggests a final argument against a skid row focus. Even if these were the most stable and responsible of workers, the simple fact is that they make up so small a fraction of the total farm labor force the industry could, with relatively little adjustment, get along without them entirely. (See Tables 2 and 3.) It is no secret that many growers and farm labor contractors maintain their "day haul" (i.e., shape-up)

activities only because the California Department of Employment requires them to do so as a precondition to receiving foreign contract workers. (A pick-up truck sent to Stockton's skid row at 4:00 in the morning satisfies the requirement of Public Law 78 that "no (Mexican) workers... shall be available...unless...reasonable efforts have been made to attract domestic workers for such employment...")

G. The Home Guard.

It is difficult to reach the home guard, both in logistic terms, and in more human terms. Although they live in what are often called "shoestring communities" and "neighborhoods", these tend to be mere agglomerations of essentially isolated families, rather than "communities" in a sociological sense. Initial contacts, then, would almost have to be made on an individual basis rather than in groups. At the same time, impressive arguments may be made in favor of an emphasis upon the home guard in the first phases of building a farm labor union. In each of the counties examined in Tables 2-5, the home guard comprises the largest single element in the farm labor force.

Secondly, the home guard increases in numerical importance as time goes by. For more than twenty years, the tendency has been for migrants to decrease in number, to put down roots in Hoovervilles and shacktowns, and to swell the ranks of the home guard.

Thirdly, with the possible exception of year-around hired hands, the home guard is the most essential element within the farm labor force. Members of the home guard do most of the pruning, thinning, cultivating, irrigating, and other skilled and semi-skilled pre-harvest activities. The agricultural industry could conceivably survive withdrawal of year-around workers, by replacing them with members of the home guard. But if the home guard withdrew, there would be no one to replace them.

Fourthly, and most importantly, the home guard is stable and responsible. Most are family people. They are taxpayers. Most own their homes, modest and even pathetic as those homes may seem to the middle-class. Their children go to school regularly. Members of the home guard satisfy all residency requirements for social and political participation. All that is lacking is to make opportunities for such participation -- including participation in the union-building process -- come to life in terms comprehensible to people who have not had such opportunities before.

It is here suggested that, primary emphasis should be placed on building solidly among the home guard. Upon this stable foundation, other storeys in the farm labor mansion could be and should be erected. Intrastate migrants, certainly; next, perhaps, interstate migrants; eventually, when it became evident the union was permanent, and could offer protection against employer reprisals, year-around workers would be added to complete the structure.

VI. Where Shall Organizing Be Done?

A. States and Regions

In answering the question, "where?", like the question, "who?", we must first conjure with the ever-present ^{likelihood} of limitations of resources. There is no useful purpose to be served by dreaming about a farm labor organizing campaign waged in all 50 states of the union, or even in an appreciable number of them simultaneously. It is necessary to pick a region where organizing seems to make good sense, and when a firm foothold has been established there, to move out into other regions.

It makes good sense to choose an area in which agriculture is highly industrialized -- i.e., in which most farm work is done by hired laborers rather than self-employed farmers and unpaid family workers. It also makes good sense to choose an area in which the obstacles to organizing mentioned in the first section of this paper are less formidable than they are in other areas. Unhappily, the places in which agriculture is most industrialized tend to be the places in which all the obstacles mentioned are most formidable. Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas are conspicuous examples. Perhaps the closest thing to a "favorable climate" for union-building in agriculture is to be found on the Pacific Coast. Not that it is favorable. But it is less unfavorable than in other regions of intensive agriculture. There is little demoralization from the bracero program in Oregon and Washington. To a large extent through the efforts of AWOC, the use of braceros is being cut back in California. As a consequence, wages are slowly rising. History seems to show that such improvements, rather than slaking the appetite for further improvements, stimulate it.

B. Natural areas

Even within a state, it will probably prove necessary to limit the scope of organizing drives, at least for a time. California is nearly nine hundred miles long. The task is to select a natural agricultural area which comes as close as possible to being self-contained: that is, which has a minimum of out-of-area competition; a minimum of in-flow and out-flow of labor; etc. Some portions of California come fairly close to this ideal. For example, there is year-around agricultural activity in the citrus belt of Santa Barbara, Ventura, Los Angeles, Orange, San Bernadino, and Riverside Counties. There is activity all year long in the fabulously rich and highly diversified San Joaquin Valley. This valley, though, is itself 250 miles long, and nearly 100 miles wide in some places. Natural sub-areas within this natural area could be chosen if one wished.

For example, in the southern end of the valley cotton can be grown -- and is, in huge amounts. Cotton cannot be grown successfully in the northern end of the valley. The selection of an initial area of operations might be made along some such ecological lines as these.

C. Crop monopolies

One of the arguments which agricultural employers use to most telling effect with legislators and the general public is that they can't meet the competition from other areas if they are singled out for unionization. It was on the strength of this argument, for example, that Governor Edmund G. (Pat) Brown of California publicly withdrew his support of farm labor legislation this year.

The argument would obviously be worthless if unionization was started in a crop-area which had a monopoly or near-monopoly on the country's production of a given commodity. There are several such crop-areas in California. The San Joaquin Delta, for example, has an effective monopoly on the production of asparagus. A small strip of coastline a little below San Francisco has an effective monopoly on the nation's production of Brussels sprouts. Three or four central California counties have an effective monopoly on the production of apricots. Three counties produce almost all the artichokes in the United States. One county (Imperial) produces three-fourths of all the country's winter lettuce. One county (Riverside) produces all the dates in the country. A number of other similar monopoly situations exist within the state of California.

Planners of a farm labor organizing drive should consider the possibility of starting with one or two of these monopoly crop-areas.

D. Supply lines

Whenever a farm labor campaign begins, requests come in from other areas, saying, in so many words, "Conditions are much worse here than where you are. When are you coming over to help us? Please hurry." It is extremely difficult to steel oneself against such appeals. But steel oneself one must. The appeals must not, of course, be ignored. And they must not be brushed aside insensitively. Each should receive, if possible, a personal visit from someone who can explain fully, clearly, and patiently the drive's larger strategy, and the need to establish a limited beachhead before moving into other areas. The dangers of "over-extended supply lines" should be carefully explained. In most cases, it should be possible to avert disappointment and disillusionment. Following proper explanation, most farm workers can appreciate that by trying to do too much, too quickly, with too few tools, nothing will get done at all. Most farm workers can understand that patience, a little while longer, is sometimes in their own best interests.

E. In-the-area organizing

There remains one level at which the question "where?" must still be examined. Assume that the planners of a farm labor campaign have selected a region, a sub-region, or a crop-area in which to begin. Where, within that area, do they make contact with the people to be organized? Do they try to reach them at their places of employment? In some ways, on-the-job contacts are preferable to any other kind. But the National Labor-Management Relations Act, which protects the right of union representatives to enter places of employment and talk to workers in every other industry, does not apply to agriculture. In this industry, union representatives can be, and have been arrested for setting foot inside the boundaries of a field

or orchard. This is true even during lunch periods, when the representatives could by no stretch of the imagination be charged with slowing down production. Agricultural employers evidently regard their employees as personal property, like their land, their machinery, their buildings, and their trees. The concept of trespass has been extended to include "intrusion" upon employees, and growers have been able to enlist sheriff's departments in enforcing this extension of the concept. Until this concept is successfully challenged in the courts, or until the Taft-Hartley Act is amended to remove its agricultural exclusion, the answer to the question, "where?", resolves into one or another form of "off-the-job."

Union rallies and mass meetings? Such attempts on the part of Mahomet to make the mountain come to him are likely to prove as futile in the future as they have been in the past. Most agricultural workers are not going to drag themselves from a ten- or twelve-hour day in the fields to a union rally when they have no conception of what a union is or what it can mean in their lives. By the time they have this understanding, there will be no need for pep rallies.

Places of entertainment? There are no places where farm workers foregather in the manner that members of a printing trade local, for example, might^{gather} in a certain bowling alley, tavern, or coffee shop.

Places of recruitment? We have already discussed the skid row shape-ups and their shortcomings.

What is there left? Places of residence. The elastic laws of trespassing make it difficult to reach many farm laborers even where they live. Year-around workers often live on the ranch. A union representative could be prevented from talking with them, and probably would be. Even some of the "home guard" may^{at times} move from their homes in town to camps on the employers' property. This is true of Filipinos, for example, who are crucially important in such crop-activities as the asparagus harvest in San Joaquin County and the Brussels sprout harvest in Santa Cruz County. A union representative who attempted to talk to a group of Filipinos in one of their camps would, at the present time, be subject to arrest.

The doctrine that farm workers are the property of their employers when occupying company housing has been applied most widely and persistently to braceros. It is not unusual for bracero camps to be surrounded by high fences, topped by barbed wire, so that the effect is more like that of a prison than a domicile. Union representatives, and, for that matter, university students and other interested persons, have frequently been refused entry to bracero camps, and threatened with arrest for trespassing if they tried. As these lines are being written, this doctrine is finally undergoing a legal test in San Joaquin County. Two members of AWOC attempted to distribute leaflets in a particularly notorious bracero camp, were beaten and then arrested, and are willing to go to jail if necessary for the sake of this application of freedom of speech, press, and assembly. The American Civil Liberties Union will handle the appeals.

There remains one major segment of the farm labor force which can be reached at any time, without legal test cases, since they do not live at the place of employment but in homes which are either rented or owner-occupied. These are the farm workers who live in "shoestring communities." In this respect, they are more accessible than any other major segment of the farm labor force. And this answer to the question, "where?", constitutes another reason why it might be well for any future organizing drive to begin with an emphasis on the home guard.

VIII. When Shall Organizing Be Done?

We have already, implicitly, answered the question of "when?" in terms of time of day: after work. This does not necessarily mean the evening hours, however, since farm laborers often have working hours quite different from those of urban workers. It is commonplace to start work as early as one can distinguish the colors of the produce, and to stop before the heaviest heat of the day. Thus, a characteristic working day in Stanislaus or Sutter County peaches might run from 5:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.: nine full hours. Allowing workers two hours to return to their domiciles, get cleaned up, and get something to eat, home visits by union representatives could properly start by 4:00 in the afternoon. Under these circumstances, the visits should stop by, say, 8:00 p.m.

The question "when?" can also mean "what time of year?" There are two schools of thought on this question. One holds that the only time of year you can profitably talk to farm workers about unionism is in the midst of the season, when, presumably, all their grievances and bitternesses are fresh in their minds. The other school of thought holds that this argument is invalid on two counts: (1) workers are often too tired and harried in the middle of the season to be willing to take the time required to talk seriously about unionism; (2) the kind of union to be desired does not flow from grievances and bitternesses, but from more affirmative feelings which can only be developed in slow and patient discussions.

The "out of season" school of thought maintains that the slack seasons, when some farm labor organizers complain "there is nothing to do," are precisely the times when there is the most to do. In San Joaquin County, for example, there are two "dead periods." The home guard calls one "Little Winter." It lasts a month or six weeks, centering in July. "Big Winter" runs from November to February. These are the times when the home guard is really at home, with nothing to do but look for an occasional odd job. Home visits during these periods could be conducted twelve hours a day.

VIII. Who Shall do the Organizing?

A. Field Representatives.

In some quarters within the farm labor movement, it is said that "You can make a farm worker into an organizer but you can't make an organizer into a farm worker." As an aphorism this is attractive, but as doctrine it is highly dubious.

Take the first half of the epigram. It may be true that many persons of reasonable intelligence, imagination, and articulateness can, through sufficient training and experience, become competent organizers. Trouble arises, however, as one loses sight of extended training and experience and subconsciously replaced hard work with the epigram itself. The unspoken assumption gradually spreads that almost any farm worker is able to organize other farm workers, simply by virtue of the fact he "speaks the same language." And so, totally unprepared workers are given the title of "organizer" and thrown into the farm labor pool to start organizing. They sink more often than they swim, and those who learn to swim at all waste a great deal of time and make a great many unnecessary mistakes in the process.

The second half of the above epigram is even more dubious doctrine. In view of the history of the labor movement, it is difficult to understand how the proposition could ever have arisen that workers in an industry can only be organized by their fellow workers from the same industry. The Automobile Workers Organizing Committee was staffed by mine workers, railroad workers, brewery workers, construction workers. Steel workers, it was sometimes said, were organized by everybody but steel workers.

The proposition that "you can't make an organizer into a farm Worker" implies that farm workers are somehow different, psychologically, from ordinary people, and that the general rules of human organization do not apply. This is an ugly proposition, and must be rejected. Farm workers are not peculiar. They are just people. The only significant respect in which they may be "different" is that they have not had as much experience with organizations, as such, as most people in our highly organized society. All that this means is that a competent organizer will begin at a more basic level in his approach and will not assume sophistication where there is innocence.

The foregoing epigram must also be rejected on strictly pragmatic grounds. Some "outside" organizers are shunned by the farm workers they are supposed to be organizing; other "outsiders" are warmly accepted. Some farm-workers-turned-organizer are shunned by their former compatriots; others are warmly accepted. The credentials which matter in farm labor are those that matter in any organizing field: not so much one's background in the industry, but very much the kind of person one is. Farm workers, like people generally, tend to respect someone who demonstrates, by his deeds, that he is honorable, compassionate, brave, insightful, straightforward, and selfless. Farm workers, like anyone else, tend to resent someone who demonstrates, by his deeds, that he is unscrupulous, callous, cowardly, fatuous, devious, and selfish.

Organizers for the farm labor movement, therefore, should come from wherever people with the essential personal qualities may be found. Some, certainly, can be found among farm workers themselves. Some, it is to be hoped, can be found within the remainder of the labor movement.

B. Who Shall Lead?

Some may say that we should wait until farm workers produce their own "natural leaders", and by so doing demonstrate that they "really want to be organized", before assistance is offered from other sources. There is reason to fear that if we wait for this ideal state, we will wait forever. It is not that potential leaders are lacking in the farm labor force. Although many have been removed from the farm labor force by the winnowing process described earlier, a wealth of human potential remains. But conditions keep such people from realizing their potential spontaneously. The abolitionists of a little over a century ago did not suggest that slavery should continue until slaves themselves rose up and struck off their own shackles. It is curious to hear an equivalent position advanced seriously today.

What is needed is someone to alter conditions in such a way that the natural leadership of the farm labor force is liberated. This someone must be keenly sensitive to the danger of his overstaying his visit. He must be as nearly without personal ambition as one can be and still be human.

It is pertinent to consider here the distinction between hortatory and administrative leaders. Some leaders have "charisma". They are gifted public speakers. They can move an audience to tears, to laughter, to anger, to love, to hope. The problem in farm labor, however, is that there are no audiences. The problem is to overcome the fragmentation and alienation which keeps farm workers from forming audiences -- or groups of any kind. This is not a problem which exhortation can solve. It is here suggested, therefore, that the welkin-ringing type of leadership, however appropriate it may be in other settings, is not appropriate to the farm labor movement, at least at this point. A more contemplative type of leadership is needed, which can analyze a complex situation coolly, which can anticipate and plan for the future, which can administer those plans calmly and efficiently, which can delegate responsibility. This type of leader cannot afford to be an iceberg, to be sure. He must be able to inspire confidence. But there are other ways -- and better ways -- to inspire genuine, lasting confidence than through oratory.

We shall see what some of them are in subsequent chapters.

IX ~~III~~. What Kind of Structure?

In this section, we shall discuss two structural considerations -- different but closely interrelated. These are the organizing drive, and the union which is to emerge from it.

A. The Union

It would be presumptuous to attempt to anticipate in detail the formal structure of the farm workers' union of the future. Any number of arrangements of branches, locals, councils, conferences, and so forth, are equally possible and equally acceptable. One cannot foresee the circumstances which might lead toward some particular arrangement.

One can, however, lay down certain principles which should undergird the exterior workings of whatever union structure evolves. They include:

1. Openness. There should be no secrets between the officers and rank-and-file of the union. The advantages of openness in policy-making and execution outweigh what may sometimes seem to be the dangers of information "leaks." The advantages are nothing less than the morale of the membership and thus the very life of the organization. It might conceivably give a certain amount of "aid and comfort" to the organizing committee's opponents to know, for example, how much of its funds it had spent, and how much remained. But this risk would be far less dangerous than the risks to members' confidence if such information were withheld. They want to know such things, they are entitled to know such things, and many of them will wander away and not be back if knowing such things is denied them.

2. Honesty. This goes without saying.

3. Anti-discrimination. This goes without saying..

4. Democracy. This concept requires explanation.

As we shall here use the term, democracy is not something added after the fact of union-building, like a coat of new paint over old mortar. It is either mixed with the very mortar of union-building, or the union will probably never become truly democratic. The "style" of a union -- or for that matter, of any organization -- is largely set by the manner in which it is created. If it is formed by caudillos who do not really represent the ideas and feelings of those whom they "lead", the "leaders" will live forever in fear of their followers, and this fear will be passed on to their successors and to their successors' successors.

What does democracy mean in the context of union-building? The same things it means (or should mean) in any other context. It means that one who is in a position to make decisions affecting the lives of other people should be answerable to those people. It means a faith that human beings, confronted with possible alternative courses of action, and necessary

background information, are capable of making sensible choices. It means a faith that human beings, having made such choices, are capable of assuming responsibility for the consequences -- even if the choices prove to be wrong, as sometimes they surely will. Democracy means scrupulous care that the people whose lives are going to be affected by the decisions in any given area shall have the opportunity to examine all the alternatives available, and shall have the opportunity to choose between those alternatives.

Democracy must thus be distinguished not only from totalitarianism or dictatorship, which is the overt form of authoritarianism, but also from managerialism, which is the covert form of the same thing. There is no qualitative difference between a society -- or a union -- in which a "maximum leader" tells people what to do, outright, and a society -- or a union -- in which the "experts" manipulate people toward some predetermined conclusion by manipulating the information and alternatives provided them. From the standpoint of democracy and non-democracy, there is nothing to choose between the uncontested elections in an iron curtain country and the uncontested elections in the American Legion, American Medical Association -- or a union.

But choices, as such, are still not a sufficient condition for democracy as we are here attempting to define it. Freedom implies not only choices, but choices invested with content and meaning. A choice between candidates about whom one knows nothing is not a meaningful choice. A choice between candidates who think alike is not a meaningful choice. A choice between voting for an incumbent union official and merely voting against him (or not voting at all) is not really a meaningful choice. A choice between voting for the recommendation of a resolutions committee or negotiating committee and merely voting against it (or not voting at all) is not a meaningful choice.

The process of building a democratic union requires the continual review of alternatives. More than that, it requires plausible and viable alternatives. What is the meaning of ^{a union member} voting against an unopposed candidate, resolution, or contract that he doesn't like? How can he register what he is for, what he believes in? He cannot, unless all the alternative possibilities have been articulated, argued, and placed on the ballot together with the officially "favored" alternative.

The process must therefore be carried a step farther. To make sure the arguments have been heard, it is necessary that those who plan and conduct union meetings and elections and other decision-making functions not only permit the emergence of alternatives, but cultivate them, and encourage their unfettered presentation.

To representatives of traditional organizational thinking -- which includes most trade union leaders -- these propositions doubtless conjure up visions of divisiveness and threats to the very existence of the organization. And, given a tradition of non-democracy, they are probably right. Where leaders have come to power by stifling or destroying the opposition, they dare not relax or their power will be taken from them by the same sorts of means. If opposition is tolerated, the chances are it will be cast in the same pattern as the leadership from which it has learned its

organizational lessons. It will seek to destroy the old leadership rather than merely supplant it. Since old leaders do not care to be destroyed any more than anyone else does, they run their organizations with the proverbial iron hand, and do not tolerate genuine opposition.

This is why it is vital that the "tone" or "style" of the organization be set in a democratic mode from the very outset. It is extremely difficult to change later on. But in an organization where disparate viewpoints are encouraged from the beginning, there is no point in conspiracies, character-assassination, treachery, and the other hallmarks of a non-democratic political "style". Everyone knows that he has as good a chance as everyone else to have his point of view adopted without such tactics.

At every stage of the farm labor union-building process, there should be provision for and solicitation of the presentation of different viewpoints regarding strategy and tactics. Let us assume, for example, that a local of the farm workers' union in San Joaquin County confronts the autumn harvest season with limited resources. A reasonable assumption. Let us assume that the local's officers feel that, all things considered, the bulk of the resources should be spent on trying to obtain a contract with the tomato grower's association. They should, at that point, stop and ask themselves, "Are there any alternatives?" There are. Grapes. Walnuts. Perhaps others. An effort should then be made to find spokesmen for the proposition that primary emphasis should be placed on grapes, or walnuts, or whatever other reasonable alternatives there might be. These various arguments should be laid before the people likely to be affected by the decision: that is, the farm workers of the upper San Joaquin Valley. Only on that basis, should tactical details be formulated by the local's executive committee.

Some will protest, "But you just can't run a union that way. If the tomato-pickers lost out, they'd refuse to support the grape-cutters, and if the grape-cutters lost out, they wouldn't lift a finger for the tomato-pickers." If the above hypothetical case were a small "experiment in democracy" in the midst of a long tradition of authoritarianism, the pragmatic objection might be valid. But if one begins at the very beginning with a genuine cultivation of the democratic style, the prophets of non-democracy will be confounded. Adults "pick up their marbles and go home" only if they are afraid there is going to be no game tomorrow. If the farm labor union is authentically democratic, ^{neither} the grape-cutters, the walnut-shakers, nor anyone else in the union need ever fear that their chance of the moment is the only chance they will get.

This leads us to another essential characteristic of union democracy as we are here comprehending it. It is not enough to say that democratic unionism recognizes the right of minority opinion. It is not enough merely to acquiesce in this right, to tolerate it. In the really democratic union, minority opinion is cherished as the very precious thing it is. It is actively protected and even developed. Holders of viewpoints which may be, for the moment, in a minority are not only permitted but encouraged to organize on behalf of their view -- to form a caucus, a committee, a party, a tendency.

Under such circumstances, it would be absurd for the tomato-pickers or grape-cutters or any other "losers" to resort to sulking, rancor, or withdrawal. There would be so much they could accomplish by continuing to work within the organization and so little they could accomplish by bad will or backstabbing.

Counterfeit democracy or quasi-democracy is indeed a grotesque condition which may yield grotesque results. To convene a meeting of farm workers who do not know one another and ask them to elect officers is foolish. Bernard Shaw spoke truly when he said, "The only cure for the failings of democracy is more democracy." But by more democracy he did not mean more foolishness. He presumably meant more systematic development of means for conveying full information to the people, more systematic cultivation of opportunities for choosing between live alternatives, more systematic development of means for minorities to try, publicly, to convert the majority.

Unions do not become democratic by the U.S. Government passing a law and saying, "You shall now be democratic." Democracy is not something which can be grafted onto an already growing plant. Democracy is a root. If you place it in the right kind of soil, and water and feed it well, and pull out the tares, and nurture it, it will grow. But you can kill it, even before you plant it, by improper preparation. Which brings us to a discussion of the pre-union, or organizing committee, phase of union-building.

B. The organizing drive

1. An organizing drive is frequently likened to a military operation. In this paper, for example, we have employed such terms as "campaign," "beachhead," "logistics," "supply lines," etc. But the analogy should not be overworked. Military campaigns imply military minds, and military minds imply authoritarianism, a confidence in violence, and other characteristics which need not and should not enjoy a place in constructing a union. The excuse, of course, is that authoritarianism is efficient. It may be efficient in laying a mine field, capturing an enemy anti-tank gun, or launching a missile. One wonders if it is efficient in gaining more constructive objectives. And even if it were, one wonders if such yields of authoritarianism would be worth what they would eventually cost.

All this ^{is} by way of saying that the "style" and structure of the organizing committee are inseparable from and no less important than those of the union itself. The type of union which will result, which can result, is going to be limited by the type of organizing drive which is conducted. One cannot reasonably hope to build democratic structures by anti-democratic means; honest structures by dishonest means; affirmative structures by destructive means. The following minimum provisions should be built into the organizing drive:

a. Regular opportunities for the rank-and-file to communicate information and to express its views on the conduct of the drive, and to hear the information and opinions of the organizing staff.

b. Regular financial reports to the rank-and-file.

c. Maximum opportunity for the rank-and-file to select representatives for negotiating committees, legislative testimony, and as many other activities of the drive as possible.

2. Selection and training of staff members. The appointment of organizing committee personnel should be put on some systematic basis. Standards should be set up -- job qualifications for technical personnel, organizers, chief stewards, even for office personnel. Hiring and firing may ultimately be the responsibility of a single person -- the general director, office manager, organizational director, or whoever -- but such decisions should not be made without consultation with others.

The question of recruitment and appointment of staff members cannot really be separated from the question of training. The "sink or swim" approach mentioned earlier is not fair to anyone concerned. Every staff member should serve an "apprenticeship" of several months, in the course of which he would receive orientation from the technical staff and field staff. Gradually, he would be given assignments involving more and more independence. This "apprenticeship" would be a boon to the fledgling organizer. It would also have the advantage of providing the only realistic basis on which a prospective staff member could be evaluated by his peers: his performance on the job.

3. Staff members of the organizing committee should have regular opportunities to exchange information and views with one another and with the committee's directors.

The infrequency of staff meetings in AWOC can perhaps be understood in terms of the far-flung geographic dispersion of the organizers. A future organizing committee might not be so widely dispersed, at least for the first year or two. But even if it were, the importance of regular staff meetings is such that they should be held regardless of distances -- if they are the right kind of meetings. The following qualifications should be met. Meetings should not be mere formalities but should deal with significant policy questions currently before the organization, and those likely to arise within the foreseeable future. All meetings should have carefully thought-out agendas. At every meeting, provision should be made for every staff member to express himself on any matter of concern to him.

During seasons which are not particularly busy, the entire staff should probably meet once a week. During busy seasons, it may not be feasible for the whole staff to meet so frequently. But even during this time, the following steps should be taken to keep the staff as closely knit as possible under the circumstances: (a) regional or sub-regional staff meetings of all the organizers working in a given area; (b) regular weekly meetings of all the staff members remaining at the drive's headquarters; (c) continuous field visits and "cross-fertilization" by the Director of Field Operations, Organizational Director, or whatever title might be given to this crucial position in the new organizing committee. (See Section XII-C, below.)

4. National organizing committee

Although, at the outset, any organizing drive in agriculture will likely have to be restricted geographically, it should function with at least the overview and advice of a national organizing committee. Such a committee should include representatives of established trade unions which have, within recent memory, succeeded in organizing the unorganized. They need

not have been involved in any activities related to agriculture. The all-important qualification for membership on this committee should be practical knowledge of how to go about organizing people. In addition to the wisdom and experience such a committee could put at the disposal of the organizing committee which was actually on the firing line, it would serve these useful purposes: (a) provide a concrete demonstration that the farm labor problem is a problem for all labor, and that labor is aware of this truth; (b) anticipate the day, which is certain to come eventually, when the farm labor organizing drive will move out from its "beachhead" and become national in scope.

If the organizing drive is supported by a single international union, rather than by the AFL-CIO as a whole or by a combination of international unions (e.g., IUD), this proposal for a National Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee may seem out of place. I do not believe that it is. Whatever might be the international union which exercised jurisdiction in this field, however big and wealthy and powerful it might be, it should be big enough, in the other sense of the term, to entertain suggestions from and to work with other arms of the labor movement on this most complex and immense organizing task.

4. The equivalent of the National Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee should be created at the state level, in each state in which the drive operates. As in the case of NAWOC, the state committees would not necessarily have any financial or other control over the field organizing (although this is a conceivable arrangement). The primary purpose would be to get as much of the labor movement as possible involved in the organization of this last unorganized industry. Such involvement would be a two-sided coin of great worth. The benefit to the farm labor drive would be matched by the benefit to the whole labor movement of becoming involved in a fight for elementary social and economic justice. The effect could be as revitalizing as the great drives of the 1930's.

5. There have been many previous attempts to organize agricultural workers. It is a tragedy that no effort has been made to profit by the lessons that leaders and members of these earlier drives must have learned, and could teach. Any future organizing committee should call an Advisory Conference, to which veterans of previous farm labor organizing campaigns would be invited. With a little spadework, it should be possible to locate both leaders and rank-and-filers of such campaigns, dating back to efforts of the AFL in California in the 1910's. The Advisory Conference would have no policy-making powers, but its suggestions would be taken into consideration by the organizing committee. Furthermore, the Advisory Conference should not be a one-time affair, but should be subject to periodic recall, for analysis of new problems of the present in the light of experiences of the past.

What is more, special conferences should be called from time to time to which an even wider array of persons interested in farm labor organization might be invited. For example, many people representing church groups -- e.g., Migrant Ministry, AFSC, and Catholic Rural Life Conference -- have had sustained and intimate contact with farm workers -- more sustained and intimate, in fact, than representatives of the labor movement have had.

The problems of union-building should be fully aired at these conferences, with no strictures laid upon criticism of present policies or recommendations for new directions. Once again, of course, the organizing committee itself would in no way be bound by these recommendations, but it could certainly be expected to take them into account. And, once again, the value of such discussion would lie not only in the value of the ideas which might be presented to the organizing committee, but also in the sense of involvement which would be communicated to all participants. If it is desirable to have labor-at-large regard the farm labor drive as its drive, it would be even more desirable to have society-at-large regard the farm labor drive as something in which it has a direct stake -- as it does.

X. What kind of strategy?

Some persons with long experience in the labor movement reject advance planning on the grounds that "blueprints" are unworkable in an organizing drive. That is a straw-man argument. No one is suggesting a "blueprint" in the sense of saying, "On November 13 we do this; on November 14 we do that; and on November 15 we do such-and-so." Day-to-day events, which cannot be predicted, shape day-to-day activities, which hence cannot be pre-ordered in detail.

But there is a compelling necessity for some sort of rational, broad strategy, within the framework of which the organizers and the technical staff can fit their activities on a fluid basis. Without any such framework at all, staff members merely drift from day to day, and some grow so frustrated they drift out of the movement entirely.

We have already raised several of the sorts of questions which must be dealt with in any coherent organizational strategy: who is to be organized? where? when? for what purposes? Let us now consider some other questions of the sort which must be answered in the formulation of a strategy for the building of a farm labor union.

A. Should organizing be undertaken on a crop-by-crop basis? If so, what crops should be organized first?

1. We have already spoken of the monopoly crop-areas to be found in California, and the possible advantages of concentrating on those at the outset. In choosing a "strategic" crop, other questions should be examined as well.

2. What are the respective merits and demerits of concentrating upon staple crops as opposed to luxury crops? Let us take potatoes, as an example of a staple crop, and asparagus as an example of a luxury crop. It might be expected that the organizing drive could gain a certain amount of leverage from the fact that consumers are going to continue to demand potatoes -- a staff of life in our culture -- and will presumably pay more for them if that is necessary to confer fair labor standards upon potato workers. People do not have to have asparagus, or artichokes, or Brussels sprouts, or strawberries, or mushrooms, or olives, or a number of other luxury crops in which California specializes. In the face of unionization, growers of such crops might simply stop growing them.

On the other hand, there is leverage to be gained from the fact most of these specialty items are crops in which California growers enjoy a total or effective monopoly over the entire nation's production. Few staple items are concentrated in California. In fact, they are staple precisely because they are relatively easy to grow, and are grown in a large number of different areas.

Still another argument which can be raised on the subject of organizing staple vs. luxury crops has to do with the role of public opinion. The growers would undoubtedly attempt to turn community sentiment against the potato workers, with lurid images of "ruthless labor goons jeopardizing essential crops." They would not be able to capitalize on quite this type of propaganda in the case of ^{or} asparagus and other luxury crops.

3. Another strategic question which should be passed upon before organizing activity began in any crop is: what are the pros and cons of organizing workers in a perishable crop as opposed to a non-perishable crop? Let us consider, for example, strawberries as opposed to walnuts. Neither is a staple crop, so there is little to choose between them on those scores. But strawberry fields must be picked virtually every day or berries become overripe. Not only are those berries lost, but the plants may stop bearing for the remainder of the season. In the face of any unionization efforts, strawberry growers would naturally try to get as much advantage as they could from the specter of "foodstuffs spoiling in the fields." The importance of this advantage should not be minimized. Walnut growers, in contrast, cannot use this appeal to popular emotion. Their product will keep for weeks, hanging on the trees, or lying on the ground, without undergoing any appreciable deterioration.

But all the arguments are not on the side of tackling walnuts before strawberries. Since walnut growers could withstand a siege of some weeks before they began to worry, any organizing efforts which involved strike action would have to cope with the many serious problems of extended strikes. They require a great deal of planning, they cost a great deal of money, they entail a great deal of risk that the membership will lose its zeal and esprit de corps. In strawberries, however, if a strike were called, it would very likely be decided one way or the other within a matter of days. This is another of the strategic considerations the organizing committee should take into account in advance, particularly if it is straitened financially -- as it is almost certain to be.

4. Let us consider still another factor which should be evaluated in devising crop strategy: the condition of the industry. As we have stated earlier, growers of many commodities are nearly as badly disorganized as their workers. As a consequence, even the growers of some of California's monopoly crops are in economic difficulty. This cannot be a decisive consideration to the union, obviously. Probably a full 90% of the growers' financial tears are crocodile tears. But the union cannot afford to overlook the possible effects of tears. Even if they are crocodile tears, they often have a power to move the uninitiated. It is not out of the question that agricultural employers, taking their claims of poverty to the general public, to legislators, and to government agencies, could obtain preferential anti-labor legislation and administrative rulings even beyond what they already have. Until the union is in a position to counter this sort of thing with effective political action of its own, it might do well to focus upon crops which are doing well financially and which promise to continue to do well financially. Cherries are an example of such a crop; tokay grapes are another example; there are others. They are no secret. Everybody in the industry knows about them. Growers of such crops would make laughing stocks of themselves if their public relations rested on claims of poverty.

5. The following consideration is closely related to the foregoing. Most of the crops which are relatively secure financially at the present time are secure because the growers have organized themselves in sensible ways. California grows all of the country's avocados. That in itself is no guarantee of success for avocado growers. But they have also formed the Calavo cooperative, which is effective because almost all avocado growers belong to it. California also grows all the country's almonds. Virtually all almond growers belong to the California Almond Growers Exchange. The same is true of raisin growers. California has a monopoly. Almost all the growers belong to the Sun-maid cooperative. The same is true of walnut growers. California has a monopoly. Almost all walnut growers belong to the California Walnut Growers Exchange, a cooperative which markets its product under the Diamond brand name. In addition to cooperatives, growers have at their disposal, if they care to use them, state and federal agricultural marketing agreement acts, which provide for quantity and quality controls, among other purposes, if two-thirds of the producers of a given commodity vote for them. Approximately thirty of these marketing agreements are in effect in California at the present time. They cover such products as cling peaches, lemons (a California monopoly product), dried figs (still another California monopoly), prunes (still another), plums (still another), pears, apples, winter lettuce, Brussels sprouts, lima beans, and oranges. These arrangements are important to the farm labor movement in that they have tended to produce something approaching stability in the industries covered. They are also important in the battle for public sympathy in the following way: growers try to depict themselves as the last bastion of liberty, of rugged individualism, of free enterprise. They try to depict unions as destroying these qualities. The marketing orders we have mentioned are far more monolithic, far more authoritarian, far more inflexible, far less individualistic, far less "free" than even a bad labor union. A grower may be fined \$500 every time he tries to sell more than he has been allotted under the marketing order. He may have voted against the order, but he is bound by it just the same. What kind of arguments against the principle of unionism can growers seriously raise under these circumstances?

These are some of the sorts of strategic questions which should be raised -- these are some of types of pros and cons which the organizing committee should weigh and decide upon before activity begins in any crop.

B. What types of farms?

The Chairman of the Western Conference of Teamsters has publicly scoffed at the AWOC for "trying to organize three man farms," and has announced that if and when his union moves into the farm labor field, it will confine itself to California's 14,000 industrialized farms. One is not sure where this gentleman obtained his information about industrialized farms, and even less sure on what basis he formed his judgments about AWOC. But the question he raises is an important one.

It might be maintained that small and medium-sized farms are easier to "pick off" than huge factories in the field. On the other hand, it might be maintained that bellwethers of the industry should be the primary targets -- that when the California Packing Corporation, for example, falls, the whole "right-to-work" arch in agriculture will fall. Against the first proposition, it could well be argued that family farmers are, in effect, farm workers, and an alliance rather than enmity should be cultivated. There is also the formidable role which public opinion could play if the organizing drive were to concentrate on "the little fellow."

But, at the same ^{time}, one can point to historical experience which suggests that the "giant of the industry" approach does not work, at least in agriculture. This strategy was tried for two and a half years in the DiGiorgio strike of the late 1940's. It ended in total defeat for the union. If a colossal corporation really wants to, it can ignore a union almost indefinitely, writing off its entire crop if necessary. Reserves, tax rebates, income from other corporate activities, and support from allied industries will enable it to outlast any farm workers' union in an endurance contest.

Against both of the above propositions, it could well be argued that the farm workers' union should not focus upon any particular size of farm, but should focus on workers, until the point is reached that all growers--large and small, of a given crop--or all the growers, large and small of a given area--can be addressed simultaneously.

In any event, this is another of the types of strategic questions which should be grappled with by the organizing committee very early in the game.

C. Categories of Workers

We have dealt at length, in Section V, with the several disparate categories of workers in the farm labor force, and have reviewed the arguments for and against concentrating organizing efforts upon one or another type. This question is intertwined with the question of organizing by crop. Assume that it has been concluded braceros are well nigh impossible to organize. This would limit the crops and areas in which the drive could reasonably hope to operate effectively. For example, it would rule out tomatoes in all areas. It would rule out the whole Imperial Valley and San Diego County. It rules out strawberries. It rules out lettuce. It rules out a number of crops which might be considered highly "organizable" from every other standpoint. If one began with the opposite assumption -- i.e., that the bracero program would be properly administered and that braceros would then become the most organizable of farm workers -- one would come to opposite conclusions about the types of crops and areas in which to operate.

Or, assume that one felt the Anglo migrants who call themselves "rubber tramps" were the most likely group around which to begin building a farm labor union. One would then search for crop-areas in which rubber tramps are prominent: San Joaquin County cherries; Yolo County apricots; Lake County pears; Butte County olives; etc.

If the organizing committee decided that union building could best proceed on a foundation of the "home guard," still different conclusions about crops would follow. In this event, the organizing committee would probably not choose any particular crop emphasis, since the "home guard" does not dominate single crops at a time, in the manner of braceros or rubber tramps, but is important to a number of different crops simultaneously. To concentrate upon any one of these crops would, in effect, split the "home guard"--a consequence hardly to be wished.

D. Sequence of goals

Still another strategic question which might be explored by the organizing committee before the battle, so to speak, rather than in its midst, is this: what is the first objective to be sought: the second? the third? and so forth. For example, does one seek union recognition from the very beginning of bargaining with employers, or does one seek wage increases first and union recognition later? ~~or~~ does one seek job security before either of them?

I only raise the question here. I shall not attempt to answer it -- at least in the foregoing terms -- because I do not believe it is the function of the organizing committee itself to negotiate with agricultural employers, but only to organize workers to negotiate on their own behalf.

This proposition brings us logically to a consideration of organizing methods.

XI. What Kinds of Organizing Methods?

A. The need for unorthodoxy

The farm labor organizing committee must be prepared for the possibility -- it is not a certainty, but it is a possibility -- that at the outset it may have to be concerned with problems quite outside the orthodox orbit of unionism. So much the worse for orthodoxy. The nearest thing to a flat statement we shall lay down in this paper is the following. Farm workers will not be organized by hackneyed and unimaginative methods. (Nor will white collar workers or any of the rest of the unorganized.) If the farm labor organizing committee concentrates upon migratory workers, it may find they are immediately concerned more about their children's health and education than about job conditions. If the farm labor organizing committee concentrates upon the residents of "shoestring communities," it may discover that these people are less concerned about their wages than they are about an urban redevelopment project which is about to wipe out all their homes. However "unorthodox" the concerns, these are the concerns with which an organizing drive must start. Other concerns will follow, and eventually, of course, the usual union objectives of improved wages and working conditions, job security, union recognition, and the like, will loom large.

B...Following are a few of the sorts of arrangements which might give agricultural workers the opportunity to become personally involved in the solution of problems interesting and important to them.

1. Housing committee
 - a. Maintain a file of farm workers who wish either to rent or buy, together with information about their financial situation, number of children, and other pertinent facts.
 - b. Maintain a listing of properties for rent, lease, or sale, in which agricultural workers might be interested.
 - c. Attempt by all appropriate means to reduce housing barriers based on such irrelevant factors as race, national origin, religion, language, or occupation.
 - d. Assist farm workers in fighting unfair evictions, condemnation proceedings, etc.
2. Health and welfare committee
 - a. Set up a credit union for farm workers.
 - b. Attempt to arrange group health and accident insurance for members.
 - c. Manage an emergency fund, to be used for compassionate purposes when there is little likelihood of repayment.
 - d. Operate a clearing house of information about the availability of family counselling, categorical and general assistance, and other social services in the community, *and how to obtain these rights.*
3. Social and recreational committee
 - a. Organize dances, picnics, etc.
 - b. Operate a book and magazine exchange.
 - c. Arrange for the showing of motion pictures which can be obtained free of charge from film libraries.
4. Education committee
 - a. Issue a local newsletter for members.
 - b. Arrange discussions, forums, etc.
 - c. Arrange for English and citizenship classes.
 - d. Publish informational pamphlets on Social Security, workmen's compensation, etc.
5. Political action committee
 - a. Register farm workers to vote.
 - b. Arrange "meet the candidate" meetings.
 - c. Conduct meetings for the discussion of political issues of the day.
 - d. Organize letter-writing campaigns and other forms of legislative advocacy when the members have coalesced around a given position on a given issue.
6. Finance committee
 - a. Attempt to ensure that members remain current in their dues.
 - b. Organize special fund-raising activities, such as rummage sales, bazaars, fiestas, etc.

7. Membership committee
 - a. Recruit new members.
 - b. Initiate members into rights and responsibilities of membership.
 - c. Maintain membership records.
8. Membership service committee
 - a. Workmen's compensation cases.
 - b. Disability insurance cases.
 - c. Labor commissioner cases.
 - d. Public Law 78 cases.
 - e. Industrial Welfare Commission cases.
 - f. Other.
9. Community service committee
 - a. United Crusade, etc.
 - b. Assistance to other unions on strike.
 - c. Other.
10. Mutual aid committee
 - a. Buy basic foodstuffs and other commodities cooperatively.
 - b. Perhaps grow certain foodstuffs cooperatively.
 - c. Arrange canning bees, etc.
 - d. Maintain a file of members' exchangeable skills: automobile repair, haircutting, carpentry, etc.
11. Ladies' Auxiliary
 - a. Conduct cooperative nursery school, or day care center.
 - b. Organize a baby-sitting exchange.
 - c. Organize an exchange of children's clothing, toys, etc.
 - d. Playground equipment.
 - e. Rummage sales (in cooperation with Finance Committee).
 - f. Pot-luck suppers (in cooperation with Social and Recreational Committee).
 - g. Cooperative buying (in cooperation with Mutual Aid Committee).
12. Employment committee
 - a. Train workers in new agricultural skills, or improve the skills they already possess.
 - b. Organize crews of experienced, dependable workers.
 - c. Arrange placement of these crews.
 - d. Arrange car pools for transportation to and from work.
 - e. Assist in educating workers on the history, meaning, and problems of unionism and union membership.
 - f. Assist in training field stewards.
 - g. Assist in handling job grievances.
 - h. Assist in drafting wage and working condition demands.
 - i. Assist in negotiating contracts, if opportunity arises.
 - j. Assist in strike action, if necessity arises.

Some of these functions would have to be shared with the organizing committee until groups of rank-and-filers were strong enough and stable enough to proceed as local unions or the equivalent. This is particularly true of the functions of what we have called the "employment committee".

But the overall organizing committee should constantly seek for a maximum of participation by rank-and-filers in such activities, not only because this is the way to build a strong union, but because it is the way to build a union which is strong in more places. Every time an organizer can delegate a responsibility to a rank-and-file member, and know it will get done, he has freed himself to go forth and organize more rank-and-file members.

Professional organizers are really only catalysts. The bulk of the organizing, particularly in a jurisdiction as vast and sprawling as agriculture, must be done by union members who expect no other recompense than the priceless recompense of seeing people obtain justice, and develop their human potential. For financial reasons, it is unlikely that the ratio of organizers to unorganized farm workers will be more than one to 500 in any given area or crop within the foreseeable future. It is obviously out of the question to think that a single organizer could maintain personal contact with 500 widely scattered persons, process their complaints, and so forth. The professional organizer might be likened to a precinct leader, who, more than anything else, supervises and coordinates the activities of the block captains and block workers in his territory.

The analogy is not too imprecise, particularly if the organizing committee decides to concentrate upon the home guard. An organizer might be assigned to Stockton's East End, Boggs Tract, St. Linus district, or "Dogpatch." Through house calls, he would be expected to locate farm workers who were sufficiently interested in organizing to hold a house meeting in their own homes. The initial house meetings might be very small -- six or eight or ten relatives, friends, and neighbors. In the first round of house meetings, some workers who were more concerned than others might be expected to emerge. These workers -- perhaps only one or two per block -- would receive special attention and training from the organizer. From then on, they would serve as block captains, lieutenants, or whatever they might be called. They would organize subsequent house meetings. Periodically, the several block captains together with the professional organizer would arrange for neighborhood-wide meetings. Periodically, the volunteer organizers and rank-and-filers from the various neighborhoods would meet in community-wide meetings -- the equivalent of a local union, although it might not be called that for a long while. *And, similarly, there should be coordination between communities and regions.*

C. The helpers

We have remarked that, in the course of time, the bulk of the organization of a farm workers' union will have to be done by the farm workers themselves -- and should be. But we have also suggested that, for the present, certain prerequisites for self-organization are missing -- otherwise farm workers would have organized themselves long ago. The qualities which are known as "social" -- group awareness, mutual purposes, division of labor, claims and expectations, roles and statuses -- have largely been denied agricultural workers. Even those who live in close physical proximity, as in the "shoestring communities" of the San Joaquin Valley, are often strangers to one another.

A labor union is not something instinctive. It is a relatively advanced form of human association. A lasting labor union presupposes a period of "training" on the part of the people concerned -- training in teamwork, training in self-discipline, training in the arts of relating with other people in a common effort. In a word, the task of union building in agriculture awaits certain preliminaries: the breaking down of atomization and alienation, to begin with; and, then, the development of mutual awareness and trust.

The question is, who shall prepare agricultural workers for social participation, so that the concept of a farm labor union may begin to take on urgency and meaning? To some extent, these interstices are being filled in a few parts of California by "community organizers" with a religious or philanthropic orientation. The American Friends Service Committee in California supports a farm labor project, with two representatives in the field. The Migrant Ministry of the National Council of Churches maintains a number of representatives, some of whom might legitimately be called organizers. The Bishops Committee for Migrant Workers is currently underwriting a modest pilot project among the "shoestring communities" in the vicinity of Stockton, California. Three or four volunteers from Berkeley and other urban centers are at this moment doing organizing work among farm laborers in San Joaquin County, without organizational support, but simply because they wish to play a part in this particularly accessible phase of the world-wide task of human development.

But useful and laudable as such efforts are, they tend to be restricted in purpose, sporadic in application, and unclear as to ultimate goals. For the most part, they do not point toward any permanent institutional framework within which the process of organization and development might proceed. And, to a large extent, they are unwilling or unable to foster or even to be associated with a movement which takes a militant turn, because of their religious orientation, because of their dependency upon the good will of growers, or both.

No one could do the job of pre-union organizing so well as union organizers themselves -- if they were the right kind of organizers. The qualifications are exacting and hard to find. Among other things, such qualifications include the following: (1) desire, not to "serve" disinherited humanity, but to become a member of this portion of humanity; (2) freedom from other commitments for an extended period of time; (3) indifference to the orthodox career goals of our society -- income, security, prestige; (4) passion for the possibilities of the human personality as it unfolds in social contexts.

Human development is a two-way street. Those who liberate others from their bonds -- of self-doubt, ignorance, loneliness, indignity, or whatever -- liberate themselves. This is one of the "rewards" of working for the farm labor movement. But it is not comprehensible to everyone, since it cannot be reduced to the terms by which rewards are usually measured in our civilization.

One of the very mundane questions an organizing committee in agriculture must answer is, "How much should we pay the organizers?" In my opinion, if salaries were to go above \$4,000 or so, the disparity between the organizers and those to be organized would become so bizarre that the organizing process would be hampered. Yet experienced organizers may not accept the subtle rewards, mentioned above, as compensation for salary slashes of 50 percent or more from what they are now receiving.

The organizing committee should be prepared to consider unorthodoxies in this respect as well as many others we have been discussing. America is not an unrelieved wasteland of grey flannel suits. Many competent and intelligent young people -- for example, graduate students in the social sciences -- want to make themselves useful to humanity, don't expect to make any money at it, and lack only opportunities. Tens of thousands of people have volunteered for the Peace Corps. Only a tiny fraction can be accepted. Among the remainder are doubtless many qualified men and women who could be shown that there is a job of human development to be done in rural America as important in its way as that in rural Ghana or Colombia. As a matter of fact, without even attempting a systematic recruitment program, AWOC has attracted five full-time volunteer workers who are not even reimbursed for their expenses. An AWOC organizer-training program, which would develop skills with application beyond the farm labor movement, would be an added inducement to volunteers.

Volunteer organizers pose certain problems of their own. Most of these problems can be reduced to that of discipline. Since volunteers do not receive the privileges of professional organizers (salary, expenses, fringe benefits, etc.), how can they be required to meet the responsibilities of professional organizers? They can't -- except to the extent their own dedication accomplishes this. But the occasional problems of indiscipline and irresponsibility among volunteer organizers are not insoluble. One solution lies in initial selection. In a great majority of cases, thoughtful screening should result in the selection of volunteers with built-in "gyroscopes" to keep them on an even keel without the necessity of more orthodox organization controls. This careful initial selection should be followed by a period of orientation, training, and "apprenticeship" even more thoroughgoing than that discussed earlier in connection with the professional staff.

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XII. The Organizing Committee: Positions and Programs

Perhaps the best way to discuss the concrete activities which should be carried on by an agricultural workers organizing committee is to list them under the corresponding staff positions which should be created. It is here suggested that no international union or any other sponsor should undertake an organizing drive in agriculture unless it is prepared to support an organizing committee with at least the following positions:

1. Director
2. Deputy Director (or Executive Director)
3. Director of Field Operations (or Director of Organization)
4. Director of Education and Training
5. Director of Research
6. Director of Office and Finance
7. Director of Community Relations
8. Organizers, in a ratio of approximately one to each 500 workers in the target area or crop
9. Office workers, in a ratio of approximately one to each five staff and field personnel of other types

Members of

the technical staff will sometimes work so closely together that their functions will become almost indistinguishable. For example, in the preparation of legislative testimony, the Director of Research and the Director of Community Relations, or someone from his staff, would probably work as virtual co-authors. The preparation of a training manual for stewards would doubtless involve the Director of Education and Training, Director of Field Operations, and Director of Research.

Yet, at the same time, divisions of labor and authority within the staff should be agreed upon, insofar as possible, to avoid ambiguity, friction, and duplication of effort.

A. Director. As suggested earlier, what is needed in this position, above all, is an executive. It is not the general director of the drive who is going to organize the farm workers of San Joaquin County, California, or the nation. The task of the general director, at bottom, is to organize a staff of organizers who will organize farm workers to organize themselves. To be sure, the director should be articulate, he should have presence, he should be able to make a good speech. In many people's eyes, he will be regarded as Mr. Farm Labor. But he should be strong enough to resist this type of intoxication -- to resist believing that he really is Mr. Farm Labor. To repeat, he should be essentially an administrator -- a clear and analytic thinker, a good planner; able to make informed decisions, often under pressure; able to anticipate their possible consequences; able to follow them through their consequences responsibly.

B. Deputy Director, or Executive Director. (This position should not be confused with that of Assistant to the Director, which should also be created if resources permit.) The Deputy Director should have all the same attributes as the Director, for he will have to act for the Director in his absence. In some respects, this second-in-command position is even more exacting than that of the directorship itself. The Deputy Director will be responsible for seeing that policy decisions are executed. He will be in effect, "chief of staff" and the "personnel department" of the committee. He will have more direct contact with the rest of the staff than the director will, and must consequently have even more skill in interpersonal relations.

C. Director of Field Operations. (He might also be called Director of Organization.) The AWOC has never included such a position in its structure, a lack which has had at least two unfortunate consequences: (1) jockeying among some members of the staff for the power which ^{they} thought was "lying in the streets"; (2) ambiguity, uncertainty, fuzziness, doubt among organizers as to what they were supposed to be doing, and to whom they were answerable.

In an organizing drive, the position of Director of Organization is absolutely crucial -- no less important than that of the general director. It would be necessary for the Director of Organization, however, to be content without the public recognition and accolades which would flow toward the director and deputy director. The Director of Organization would implement the strategy and policy decisions threshed out in staff meetings and put into final form by the Director. He would implement them in the most efficient and effective ways, often of his own devising. He would have to be a man of demonstrated competence, coolness under fire, quickness of mind, the ability to work with and get the most out of widely differing personalities; a man who could be trusted to make tactical decisions within a strategic framework; a man to whom the field representatives would report on a regular, frequent basis, and whom they would respect.

D. Director of Education and Training. This person would work hand-in-glove with the Director of Field Operations. He would plan stewards' training classes, rank-and-file educational meetings, staff orientation. He would prepare such materials as might be useful in connection with these activities: handbooks, charts, film strips, tape recordings, or whatever. With a backlog of audio-visual materials of these types, it should soon be possible to set up training classes by remote control, so to speak. There should be scores of training programs going on simultaneously, throughout the area of the committee's operation. If the resources of the organizing drive permitted, and if a logical division of labor could be worked out, it might be desirable to separate the duties of this position, and have a full-time Director of Education and a full-time Director of Training.

E. Director of Research. This individual would be at the service of the Director, Deputy Director, and heads of all the committees in providing them with information and analysis needed for the performance of their respective duties. The Research Director would furnish the

Director of Education and Training with factual material to be used in the preparation of curricula and audio-visual aids. He would provide the Department of Community Relations with data for incorporation into legislative testimony, for use in speech writing, etc. He would assist the Director of Field Operations by gathering and interpreting statistics on number and distribution of workers, crop-activities, wages, etc. If there were negotiations with employers' representatives, the Research Director would have to have as much data as possible on the financial condition of the industry. He should be skilled at presenting data in the most cogent ways -- tables, graphs, etc. -- as well as writing cogent explanatory texts. The Director of Research should be a combination of statistician, agricultural economist, sociologist, labor historian, and draftsman.

F. Director of Office and Finance. This person would be purchasing agent for the organizing committee. He would keep books, and prepare periodic financial reports as required by law. He would be supervisor of the organizing committee's secretarial "pool." (It is difficult to visualize a committee in which staff members had private secretaries.) Requests for typing and mimeographing of leaflets, and the like, should be channeled through the Director of Office and Finance, who would assign such jobs on the basis of the office workers' work loads and special skills.

G. Department of Community Relations

1. Legislative action. The kind of union we have been discussing throughout this paper will not be built in the halls or offices of Sacramento and Washington, D.C. But the building of a farm labor union will be either hampered or helped substantially by what goes on in Sacramento and Washington, D.C. Experiences of the past two and a half years show that it is unwise to leave the legislative fate of agricultural workers in the hands of persons who either do not know or do not care very much about farm labor. At the very least, a representative of the organizing committee should keep track of the various state and federal bills which would influence farm workers; should ascertain farm workers' points of view concerning these proposals; and should make sure that these points of view are expressed at the times and places likely to do the most good. If the resources of the organizing committee are severely limited, such expressions may have to take the form of written statements sent to public hearings, and to individual legislators. If resources permit, it would be desirable to have representatives of the organizing committee present during legislative sessions.

2. Administrative agency action. Much the same may be said about the relationship of the organizing committee to the government agencies which administer farm labor laws. In California, the agency most involved is the Department of Employment, but others include the Division of Labor Law Enforcement, Division of Industrial Welfare, Division of Industrial Safety, Division of Housing, Department of Agriculture, Department of Public Health, and Attorney General's Office. At the

national level, the agency most concerned with agricultural workers is the Department of Labor, but others include the Immigration and Naturalization Service, Department of Agriculture, Interstate Commerce Commission, Department of State, and Department of Health, Education, and Welfare.

So long as these agencies are making day-to-day decisions which profoundly affect the farm labor movement, the organizing committee should have a representative who maintains regular contact with them, and with the persons to whom they are ultimately answerable: the elected officials in the executive branches of state and national government.

3. Political action. Action directed toward legislative and administrative agencies is likely to be effective only insofar as it is backed by political action -- i.e., educating and mobilizing an electorate. The organizing committee's Department of Community Relations should work intimately with the Director of Education and Training and the Director of Field Operations, to get farm workers and their families and friends registered, politically informed, and to the polls.

4. Legal action. One of the most potent weapons agricultural employers have always used against unionization is legal harrassment, made possible by growers' control of the courts and police power in most rural areas. Roustings, injunctions, lawsuits, wholesale and unjustified arrests -- these forms of harrassment diverted much of the time and treasure of the AWOC. Such harrassment cannot be prevented, at least for the moment. And it cannot be ignored. One has to fight it in the higher courts, or find oneself tied hand and foot. It is here suggested that any serious organizing drive in agriculture within the foreseeable future will be confronted with so many legal problems so much of the time that retention of a full-time counsel is justified. One hopes that there are enough young attorneys with idealism left that such a staff position could be filled without a great deal of expense -- little more than the cost of any of the other technical positions suggested here, and far less than the cost of paying attorneys on a fee-for-service basis.

5. Public information. The organizing committee should create a speakers' bureau, so there is always a qualified speaker available to fill every request. More than that, speaking engagements should be actively sought among church groups, colleges and universities, service clubs, etc. Most of the members of the speakers' bureau should come from the staff of the organizing committee, from stewards, and from members. But it would be desirable to have a sprinkling of representatives of other labor unions, for example, who were reliable and qualified to present the organizing committee's views to the public. All members of the speakers' bureau, of course, would undergo appropriate orientation and training.

Press releases should be dispatched regularly to all the major newspapers, wire services, radio and television stations, and magazines of news and opinion.

If resources permitted, the organizing committee should sponsor a regular radio program in its areas of operation, to inform both its own membership and the general public. Tapes of these programs might be rebroadcast in metropolitan areas as well.

6. Community organization Public information by itself is not enough. The public needs not only to be informed, but to be shown that there are things to be done and shown how these things can be done. The organizing committee must know the community's resources of actual and potential support. The Department of Community Relations should help mobilize such resources into effective units for community self-education and constructive action. Hopefully, much of this organizing in the community-at-large can be directed by citizens' groups, such as the Emergency Committee to Aid Farm Workers, in Los Angeles, and the Students Committee for Agricultural Labor, at the University of California in Berkeley.

7. Working farmers. It has been demonstrated often and well that the interests of working farmers, objectively, are linked with those of farm workers, and are almost diametrically opposed to those of non-working or corporation-type farmers. We do not need to review the evidence here. Next to the grass-roots organization of farm workers themselves, nothing would be more helpful to the farm labor movement than the correction of the myth that all farmers' interests are the same. But it is doubtful that this job can be done or should be undertaken directly by the organizing committee. The brainwashing of working farmers has been so thorough that anything with a "union label" will be automatically rejected at this time. Farmers themselves will have to educate their fellow working farmers as to the basic facts of economic life. The farm workers' organizing committee should encourage the National Farmers Organization and/or the National Farmers Union to move into California and other areas while there are still some working farmers left, and demonstrate that there are alternatives preferable to the Farm Bureau and Associated Farmers, Inc.

8. Labor liason and education. It is a scandal that organized labor generally -- local unions, central labor councils, state federations, international unions, the national AFL-CIO -- knows so little about the farm labor movement. From lack of knowledge and understanding comes lack of interest and support. It is really not entirely fair to blame the rest of the labor movement for its relative indifference to the agricultural workers' organizing drive. Representatives of the drive should systematically inform the house of labor about the farm workers' drive, its purposes, its accomplishments, its problems, its prospects, its needs. It is vain for the farm labor movement to assume that the rest of the labor movement should spontaneously sense its stake in agricultural labor, its responsibilities for the drive, and the ways in which these responsibilities might be discharged. One of the principal activities of the organizing committee's Department of Community Relations should be the patient and systematic explanation of these things to every responsible arm of the labor movement at the local, county, state, national, and perhaps even international level.

9. Recruitment. One person could not possibly perform adequately all the types of tasks outlined above. For this reason, we have suggested an entire Department of Community Relations, rather than merely a Director as we did in the case of Research, Education and Training, and the like. The Department would have a Director, but he would need perhaps as many as half a dozen assistants to carry out the Department's functions of lobbying, speaking, writing, press relations, community organization, liaison with the labor movement, etc. It is doubtful that any organizing committee within the near future will be able to support so large a hired staff. The solution is to permit -- rather, to encourage -- the Director of the Department of Community Relations to recruit and train volunteers to assist him in his manifold duties. (Of course, if a full-time committee counsel were retained, he would have to be salaried.) We have already explained, in our earlier discussion of the organizing staff, our belief that a farm labor organizing drive could attract a considerable number of volunteer assistants if it wished. Differences in interests and aptitudes being what they are, some of these volunteers would probably prefer to work in the field, as organizers' assistants, while others would prefer to work at headquarters, as assistants to the technical staff. While the Director of Community Relations would need the most such assistance, it is entirely possible the directors of other technical departments could make good use of volunteer helpers, too.

XIII. What Will It Cost?

We have defined a serious organizing effort in agriculture, among other ways, in terms of a certain number of staff positions. We have tried to make a case for each of the positions suggested -- or, more accurately, for each of the functions with which these staff members would be charged. No farm labor organizing drive can be viewed as representing a serious commitment on the part of the sponsoring organization unless someone is responsible for carrying out these functions. The amount of support should be tailored to a necessary program, rather than the program being fitted to some arbitrary appropriation. On this basis, the following is recommended as a minimum budget for an organizing committee for a year:

A. Salaries and expenses

1. Director: \$7,500 salary; \$2,500 expenses	\$10,000
2. Technical staff and counsel: \$5000 salary, \$2000 expenses	42,000
3. Organizers: \$4,000 salary; \$2,000 expenses	90,000
4. Office staff: \$4,000 salary	12,000
5. Volunteers: expenses only	5,000

B. Rent, utilities, telephone, etc. (Main office and two or three branch offices): \$1,000 a month	12,000
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C. Supplies and equipment

1. Consumable supplies: paper, ink, etc.	2,500
2. Permanent equipment: mimeograph machine, typewriters, office furniture, etc. (Pro-rated)	1,500

D. Insurance: social security, unemployment insurance, staff health insurance, public liability, bonding, etc.	9,000
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E. Miscellaneous: per capita payments; legal (other than staff counsel); etc.	10,000
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\$194,000

A budget of approximately \$200,000 per year would be necessary to sustain a limited but meaningful farm workers' organizing committee. Such a budget assumes the committee's field operations are largely limited to a single county or region -- e.g., San Joaquin County and its ecological peripheries. If it were felt that the drive's success depended, for example, on expansion into the central or southern part of the San Joaquin Valley, the above budget would have to be expanded accordingly. It would be extremely unsound to attempt to "spread out" the organizers. This would mean that no territory would be covered adequately. The technical staff (research, office and financial management, etc.) might be able to service both old and new territories, but new organizers would have to be hired and trained, new offices rented, new equipment purchased, etc.

The following point cannot be overstressed: although there is a minimum below which no organizing committee could function as much more than a letterhead, the amount of money expended upon the farm labor drive is not the most crucial consideration. The way it is spent is much more important. It is entirely conceivable that \$500,000, \$1,000,000 -- any amount of money -- could be lavished on an agricultural workers organizing drive, with nothing permanent to show for it when all was spent. The monuments of an organizing drive do not lie in the temporary wage increases which may have been won while the drive was on, nor in the number of individuals who may have paid dues to the organization at one time or another during its history. The monuments of an organizing drive -- if it leaves any monuments at all -- are the groups of human beings it leaves behind: human beings who know one another, have respect for one another, work with one another, advise one another, stand together with one another in good times and in bad.

These are not the sorts of goals which can be won by money as such. They are won by long, hard work, on behalf of a coherent plan, by dedicated and informed people. All money can do is make it possible for these people to survive.

XIV. How Long Will it Take?

We do not have a crystal ball or an ouija board. We do not know what vicissitudes may occur within the government agencies which administer programs affecting agricultural workers. We do not know what attitude organized labor will take toward the farm labor movement -- how much support will be forthcoming, or whether there will be any support at all. We do not know what is going to happen in the international arena: a consideration which probably has more to do with the fate of the farm labor movement than any other we have mentioned.

Assuming, however, that present circumstances hold fairly constant, the following crude estimates may be offered:

- A. A minimum of two or three months of intensive work to recruit and train a staff, to set up offices and administrative procedures, and to analyze past experience and present conditions, before any real organizing begins.
- B. Roughly a year of organizing, as discussed above, at the neighborhood and local levels.
- C. Roughly a year of wielding the power of the organization thus formed: pressure upon legislative, executive, and judicial agencies; moral pressure upon the rest of the labor movement and the community at large; economic pressure upon agricultural employers.

If the organizing committee has done its work soundly, in a little over two years, it should be able to move on, leaving behind it a self-sustaining organization -- possibly with contracts, union recognition, hiring halls, and collective bargaining machinery. More likely, though, these will be longer-range goals for the union itself to fight for. The job of the organizing committee is to build a union, not to do all the work of a union.

In any discussion of a timetable, it obviously makes a great deal of difference how much support the organizing committee has. If it has only the bare minimum we have suggested -- approximately \$200,000 a year -- at its disposal, it will be able to function in only a small area at a time, and it would take many years just to cover a single state as large as California. There would always be the danger during this protracted period that locals begun in one part of the state would founder while the organizing committee was working in another part of the state, so that the committee would have to return to the first area and start again. Far better, obviously, if the organizing committee were able to function in a number of non-contiguous but interdependent areas simultaneously. The whole state of California could probably be covered fairly effectively by five or six regional/organizing committees, directed by a statewide committee. The initial commitment would have to be perhaps a million dollars a year, but the timetable would be shortened so greatly that in the long run the cost to the supporting organization would probably be much less.

XV. Support by Whom?

Where is the money for the farm labor movement to come from? As these lines are being written, it looks as though contributions from the AFL-CIO, which have supported AWOC for about two and a half years, will probably not be continued. There are many reasons for this, and they cannot be gone into here. The simplest of them probably is that the money is not available. The public, which for at least fifteen years has been fed on propaganda about the "rich, powerful, and arrogant" labor movement, may find this difficult to believe, but the principal house of labor, the national AFL-CIO, is in financial straits.

Although, logically, support for a farm labor drive -- and, for that matter, drives in every unorganized field -- should come from the labor movement as a whole, in practice this is apparently not going to happen. What are the alternatives?

A. Amalgamated Meatcutters and Butcher Workmen of North America. In 1960, the Executive Council of the National Agricultural Workers Union, after 25 years of autonomous existence, voted to give up its charter and to merge with the Meatcutters. At the present time, the Meatcutters union has a closer claim to jurisdiction over agricultural workers than any other international union. There is reason to believe that high officials of the AFL-CIO have been attempting to persuade leaders of the Meatcutters Union to exercise their claimed jurisdiction by taking over the support of the Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee. The Meatcutters are reported to have sufficiently large reserves that they could support a more than minimum organizing drive without hardship. For reasons unknown to the present writer, ^{however} the Meatcutters do not seem to be preparing to move into the agricultural jurisdiction which is technically theirs.

B. United Packinghouse Workers of America. Although this union has carried on a certain amount of activity in or around agriculture for a number of years, it does not appear to possess either the resources or the legal jurisdiction to undertake a farm workers' organizing drive at this time.

C. International Brotherhood of Teamsters. In May, 1961, without warning, Local 890 of the Teamsters signed a contract covering several hundred field workers with Antle, Inc., the "world's biggest and best lettuce grower and shipper." Rumors flew that this heralded an all-out entry of the Teamsters into the fields of California. These rumors gradually faded as months went by and nothing more was heard from the Teamsters. Then, late in October, Einar Mohn, Chairman of the Western Conference of Teamsters, in a speech at the University of San Francisco, not only announced that his union was going to organize farm workers, but announced portions of the union's battle plans. (Concentration upon factory farms; concentration upon stable local workers; etc.) It seems a reasonable guess, however, that if the Teamsters make a serious move in this area, it will not come before the spring crop-activities in April and May.

If and when the Teamsters enter agriculture, they may receive the assistance of the ILWU, with which the Teamsters have already signed a number of fraternal pacts. Although a very small union, the ILWU has some claim to competence in the farm labor field, having organized the sugar cane and pineapple workers of Hawaii, and several dried fruit plants in California.

D. Industrial Union Department. The AFL-CIO's Industrial Union Department (closest extant equivalent to the old CIO), and a number of its officers -- Walter Reuther, Victor Reuther, James Carey, and others -- have a long-standing interest in agricultural labor. This interest seems a sincere, principled, and unselfish one. For a number of years, these CIO sources were the main support for the National Sharecroppers Fund which, in turn, was the main support for the National Agricultural Workers Union -- an AFL union! There is now another reason why the IUD might very properly be concerned with the organization of agricultural workers. When the farm laborers of America have a union, it will be an industrial union. Farm workers will resent and resist any efforts to split and fragment the farm labor force. They will resent and resist any attempts to organize a union of "skilled" farm workers, or a union limited in name or in practice to workers in certain crops. The farm workers' union will naturally recognize job classifications, as any industrial union must, but this will be in order to rationalize the industry, and for the benefit of all the workers in it, rather than for the benefit of one or another class of workers. A proposed union for equipment operators, or ladder workers, for example, might well be rejected even by the equipment operators or ladder workers themselves. (That is, if they were given any choice in the matter, which the workers at Antle, Inc., covered by the Teamsters contract, were not. This contract covers only the "elite" of the lettuce workers.)

The Industrial Union Department is losing members, and hence per capita payments, as a consequence of automation in auto, steel, and other large industries. Nevertheless, it probably has sufficient financial resources to support a serious and successful farm labor organizing committee if it wishes to do so. There may be a number of reasons why it might not wish to do so. Is it willing, for example, to set itself up as a "rival" to the AFL-CIO's Organization Department (which is, by the way, headed by a former vice-president of the United Automobile Workers, IUD's largest constituent and the base of IUD President Walter Reuther)? Such a step might aggravate the existing tensions within the house of labor, although, objectively, it is difficult to see how AFL leaders who have refused to let their own Organization Department continue in the agricultural field could reasonably deny the right of anyone else to try to do the job.

E. State labor federations. It has been pointed out by some that if an assessment of a penny a month were levied against the organized workers of the state of California for the purpose of helping organize their brothers and sisters in the fields, it would yield about \$170,000 a year -- nearly the amount we have estimated is needed to support a small but adequate program. A flat assessment of one dollar would yield nearly \$1.5 million -- enough to carry on a very respectable program throughout

the entire state. At the time of this writing, there are no indications as to whether the California Labor Federation would even consider such a step.

Nor are there any indications as to whether the state federation might take another step which has been suggested in some quarters: solicitation of contributions from its affiliates, on behalf of an agricultural workers' organizing drive.

F. Direct solicitations. It has been suggested, in other quarters, that a farm labor union, or organizing committee, might make direct appeals for support to central labor councils, international unions, and local unions. The AWOC has received some contributions from such sources. But it is doubtful that financial support of this type could be made regular enough to sustain the long-range type of organizing program proposed in this paper. It is doubtful, too, whether the energies of the drive should be channeled into the solicitation of support. In such situations, there is a clear and present danger that fund-appeals will become so preoccupying that the real purposes of the drive are obscured and practically lost.

G. Citizens' groups. A number of voluntary organizations, such as the National Advisory Committee on Farm Labor, are deeply interested in the organization of agricultural workers. But these groups ^{do not have} very much money. And, if they did, and were willing to contribute to an organizing committee, there would be no assurance they could continue their support next year, or the year after that. For the program we have recommended, predictability of support is practically as important as amount of support. One might also question whether the principal support for an organizing drive could come from voluntary organizations which are chartered as "educational," and which obtain their own contributions (and sometimes tax-exempt status) on this basis.

Too, the question will be raised as to whether support from an organizing drive should come from such quarters. To many, it will seem self-evident that activity pointing toward a union should come entirely from the union movement. In the opinion of the present writer, this proposition is self-evident only if one assumes the new union is to be built in the image of other unions. We have not made that assumption in this paper. It is here suggested that support for the organizing drive may quite properly come from anyone who understands and agrees with the drive's objectives, methods, and principles. At the outset, such understanding and agreement might be wider-spread outside the labor movement than within.

H. The other possible sources of support for a farm workers' organizing committee -- e.g., UMW's District 50 -- are such remote possibilities it does not seem worthwhile to review them in detail here.

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XVI. Support With What Strings?

There are those who feel any farm workers' union would be preferable to no union at all, and are prepared to applaud the entry of anyone into the farm labor field. Implicit in much of this paper is the belief that there is a great deal to choose between various types of unions, that it is not necessary to acquiesce meekly in just any kind of farm labor union, but that there is much one can do to help ensure that it will be the right kind of union. In this same vein, it makes a difference -- an important difference -- where the support for the organizing committee comes from. Those who care so much about the organization of farm workers that they are ready to welcome support from ^{everyone} and any-one who is willing to contribute do not serve the movement as well as they think. Following are a few of the considerations which should be taken into account in any full discussion of possible sources of support for a farm workers' organizing committee.

A. It is unrealistic to suppose farm workers will be able to build a union without assistance. The great industrial unions of the 1930's would not have been organized without the help of outside forces, most notably the United Mine Workers. But farm workers, not one whit less than the industrial workers of the 1930's, deserve a union of their own. Nobody proposed, in the 1930's, that just because the UMW poured its organizers and millions of dollars into the Steel Workers Organizing Committee, that the UMW had jurisdiction over the industry, and that steel workers ought to become a district or department of UMW. It makes no better sense for people now to suggest that the only hope for farm workers is that they be "taken over" by some international union whose principal claim is that it is wealthy while farm workers are not.

Agricultural workers are not children. They are not helpless or incompetent. When a union has been built, they are capable of guiding it -- which is to say, capable of guiding their own destinies.

For reasons of numbers, if for no other reason, it makes little sense to speak of farm workers being "absorbed" by some existing union. A dog does not absorb a horse. A horse does not absorb an elephant. There are far more agricultural workers in the country than there are members of any union. If farm workers are not entitled to their own union, no workers are.

Or perhaps we should say that, at the very least, farm workers are entitled to decide for themselves whether they want to have a union they can call their own, or whether they want to be submerged in some existing international union. Farm workers need help badly. But perhaps they do not need it if it is conditional upon their surrendering their freedom to choose between autonomy or affiliation. It is doubtful that farm workers want to become colonials in anyone's labor empire.

From this standpoint, therefore, it is preferable that support come from some coalition of forces within the labor movement -- e.g., the Industrial Union Department, or state labor federations -- rather than from a single union, whichever that union might be. One does not anticipate that the Meatcutters, for example, would give all-out support to the farm labor movement without the expectation all workers organized would become permanent members of the Meatcutters union.

One trusts that at least some segments of the labor movement will help farm workers in building their own organization for the same principal reason the mine workers, railroad brotherhoods, and others helped build the major industrial union twenty five years ago: because the existence of vital, new unions makes more secure the position of the older unions, and their members, in society.

B. Because of the injustices so conspicuous in industrialized agriculture, for thirty years the farm labor movement has been something of a magnet for members or camp-followers of a political-economic ideology which proposes to correct injustices at the price of freedom. Farm workers know all about injustice, and not from projection or from books, but from having been on the receiving end. Nonetheless, they do not think it necessary to sacrifice other values to obtain justice. They do not wish to be manipulated, to be made pawns, to be used as means toward ends, "for their own good." The Executive Committee of the Northern California Area Council of AWOC, for example, recently adopted a statement of principle which said, among other things:

We are passionately convinced that it is possible for us...to have, at the same time, freedom...and justice. Indeed, we believe you cannot have one without the other. Rather than saying we seek justice and democracy, therefore, it would be more accurate to say we seek justice through democracy.

This proposition puts certain limits on the sources of support which would be welcomed by farm workers themselves -- or, at least, by the Northern California arm of the farm labor movement. As indicated a few moments ago, there is talk of a Teamsters-ILWU drive in agriculture. The record of the ILWU on the issue of freedom is not an impeccable one. Farm workers may not feel entirely safe entrusting their own liberties to union leaders who believe the pursuit of economic justice in Cuba and Mainland China justifies the strangulation of liberties in those places.

C. If farm workers are given the opportunity to register their opinions on the matter, they will prefer support for their movement to come from quarters which have a record and a reputation for honesty and integrity. Among the various potential sources of support which have been mentioned, this qualification would impose certain limitations and exclusions. It is not necessary to name names.

D. Although one cannot say there is unanimity among farm workers on this score, available evidence suggests that another limiting factor upon the sources of support which would be welcome is the means or "style" which might be associated with these several sources. The statement of principles referred to above, adopted unanimously by a group of farm workers in Northern California, said,

We believe that the methods by which an organization pursues its objectives are as important as the objectives themselves. If a union is built through terror, coercion, lying, and cheating, its goals -- however desirable they might have been -- will be poisoned from the very outset. The union will be able to maintain itself only by a continuation of the same methods, and will live in constant dread of a rival which is even more unscrupulous and more clever at lying, cheating, and the use of violence. We therefore propose to employ techniques in our union-building which are consistent with our objectives... Careful respect for such methods may sometimes give the impression that progress is slow. But we shall resist the temptation to compromise our principles, because we know that the union which results in the long run will be the more substantial and successful in yielding the types of human advancement we seek.

Some unions have a history of resorting to violence, coercion, and terror when they cannot obtain their objectives non-violently. Other unions do not have such a history. These differences in tradition will make some difference to agricultural workers if they have anything to say about the sponsorship of "their" organizing drive.

E. Above all else, farm workers would prefer that support for an organizing drive come from someone who respects them enough, as sentient human beings, to solicit their ideas and opinions in advance. Running through all the foregoing propositions is a scarlet thread: will agriculture have a chance to choose between violence and non-violence; between totalitarianism and anti-totalitarianism; between democracy and non-democracy; between honesty and dishonesty; between autonomy and submergence? Or will a tailor-made organizing committee be imported from Chicago, Detroit, San Francisco, or Washington, D.C.?

Agricultural workers are perhaps more bemused than anything else by the tendency of some people to imagine they have become farm labor experts by attending a congressional hearing or reading an article. People in the field are bemused by the seemingly endless use ^{not in the field} of the cliché, "plight of the migrants," when in fact the overwhelming majority of farm workers are not migrants, fewer are migrants all the time, and many non-migrants are in a worse "plight" than many migrants. Farm workers are bemused by the talk of "America's forgotten people" on the part of persons who have never actually met any field laborers, worked with them, or come to know them as human beings.

And agricultural workers are bemused -- and, occasionally, something more -- when people design programs "to help the farm workers" in total isolation from the farm workers themselves. The list of such programs is a long one, and it includes some strange bedfellows, who may disagree on everything else, but share the belief that they know what is good for farm workers.

When the Teamsters signed a contract covering certain lettuce workers at Bud Antle, Inc., they did so without consulting any of the farm workers affected. They were criticized in AFL-CIO circles for this. But when the AFL-CIO decided, in the spring of 1959, to try to organize farm workers, not a single farm worker was asked his opinions as to where the organizing might best be done, when, among whom, by whom, by what methods or tactics.

When the California Department of Public Health set up programs to spend hundreds of thousands of dollars for migrant health, it did so in virtually total isolation from flesh-and-blood agricultural workers or their representatives. Indeed, designers of those programs scrupulously avoided association of farm labor representatives for fear of incurring the displeasure of agricultural employers.

When the California Department of Industrial Relations (an agency generally sympathetic toward farm workers) set up a study to "survey farm labor housing," it did so without consulting a single farm worker or farm workers' representative as to how such a study should be conducted -- or whether there was any point to such a survey at all. When the Council of California Growers (not an agency generally sympathetic toward farm workers) opened a child care center for "migrant children" in Stanislaus County, it did so without consulting any farm workers as to their needs or feelings with respect to child care or anything else,--and then expressed dismay when it failed!

All these programs may have stemmed from the kindest and most sincere of motives. But all will fail, as the Council of California Growers' program has already failed, if for no other reason than that there is so great a gap between the understandings and assumptions of the upper-middle class, urban, Protestant, Anglo-Saxon, educated minds which devise these programs in air-conditioned offices, and the understandings and assumptions of farm workers who are often not Protestant, Anglo-Saxon, or educated, and are never urban or upper-middle class. The programs, in a word, are unrealistic, and can scarcely fail to be, under the circumstances.

But more than this, such programs, conceived and structured in nearly complete isolation from farm workers themselves, deserve to fail, on moral grounds if no other. They deserve to fail because they are all basically anti-democratic. In this respect, there is no qualitative difference between a labor leader, whatever his motives, doing something for or to farm workers, and a grower, whatever his motives, doing something for or to farm workers. What the farm labor movement needs more than anything else is support from people who want to do something with farm workers.

If liberals and labor leaders who are concerned about farm workers were to get out of the cities for a time, and mingle with some real, live farm laborers, at least two vital things would result. First, their programs might really start to work for the first time, since they might, for the first time, have an organic connection with the wishes and needs of the people affected. Second, and even more important perhaps, labor-liberal friends of farm workers would find that agricultural laborers are not just so much passive, plastic stuff waiting to be shaped by someone who thinks himself wiser and more capable. Farm workers have ideas, vitality, other qualities useful to liberals, labor, and society itself. When friends of the farm labor movement begin to design their program on the assumption that farm laborers can do things for them, as well as the converse -- i.e., with the assumption that they can do things together, mutually, reciprocally -- then their programs will begin to make good pragmatic and moral sense. Then, farm workers and their allies will have begun, really, to build a union.

XVI Summary and Conclusions

The basic argument of this paper is that in union-building, as in any collective human undertaking, it is necessary to seek out and to ask the important questions before beginning; also before beginning, to examine the alternative answers to these questions, and, if possible, to select the best alternatives; and to continue to re-examine these questions and their alternative answers, and to raise new questions and develop new answers, through the entire life of the undertaking.

Following are the sorts of questions which should be raised and examined before any future organizing efforts are conducted among agricultural workers:

1. What kind of union is desired?
2. What does "organizing" mean?
3. Who are the farm workers? In what sequence shall they be organized?
4. Where should the organizing take place?
5. When should the organizing take place?
6. Who should do the organizing?
7. Under what kind of structure?
8. With what kind of strategy?
9. With what kind of tactics?
10. With what kind of financial and other assistance?

In the course of this paper, we have suggested some of the possible answers to such basic questions, as well as a number of subsidiary questions such as "How shall organizers be recruited and trained?", "How much will a meaningful drive cost its sponsors?" and so forth. Among the plausible alternatives we have considered, we have in some cases chosen to defend the one which seemed to us most defensible. It is not necessary or important that the reader agree with these conclusions and recommendations. What is important is that the reader think through for himself the questions which have been raised, raise questions of his own, attempt to arrive at the best answers, and attempt to weave together those answers ¹⁰ - in some sort of integrated whole.

For what they may be worth, here are some of the conclusions and recommendations advanced in these pages.

1. A union should not be thought of as a vending machine, but as a form of human association through which individuals are able to exercise some meaningful measure of control over the quality of their lives.

It should give them influence over the facts of their economic existence: the types of work they do, where, for whom, how long, under what conditions, and for what recompense. It should help them if they wish to study and learn. It should help if they wish to pass their leisure time pleasurably with their fellows. It should confer the opportunity for new choices in politics. It should provide a setting in which one can relate constructively with other human beings. It should replace feelings of isolation and estrangement with feelings of identity and involvement. It should enable us to overcome our feelings that we are creatures shaped by the indifferent fates. It should enable us to feel that we are creators who shape our own fates -- together.

2. "To organize" means to weave a web of human interrelationships -- a network of fine threads which reinforce each other, which withstand pressure, and which endure over time.

3. The organization of farm workers should begin with those who are most likely to furnish a foundation of firm earth in an industry which is so largely shifting sand. In most areas, the local workers who are sometimes called the "home guard" seem closest to being the potential for such a foundation. On a stable foundation, other elements within the farm labor force can be organized.

4. In the beginning, organizing should be conducted within a manageable geographic area, selected according to the type of farms it contains, the types of crops grown, and the types of farm workers employed. The San Joaquin County asparagus industry, or the Fresno County raisin industry, are two examples among many.

5. During the first stages of the union-building process, organizers should reach farmworkers primarily in their own homes, on an individual face-to-face basis, or in small house meetings. This is a sound way to build a union of the type here proposed, and it is also a method almost forced on us by the present realities of the farm labor force. The possible hours for such contacts are necessarily limited during active agricultural seasons. Maximum use should be made of winter and other slack periods. In later stages of the union-building process, it may become feasible to reach workers in larger meetings, or on the job.

6. Knowledge of and experience in human relations is a more important qualification for organizers than knowledge of and experience in farm labor. The field staff of the organizing committee may quite properly come from diverse backgrounds. The bulk of the actual organizing will have to be done by rank-and-file farm workers who have been trained by the staff.

7. The structure of the organizing committee should be well defined as to qualifications, rights, duties. The division of its labor should provide for effective operation in such fields as research, office management, education and training, political action, interorganizational liaison, and community organization, as well as worker organization. The organizing committee should strive for as much internal democracy as possible.

8. The organizing committee should forge a general strategy on the basis of such considerations as perishability vs. non-perishability of commodities; monopoly positions and financial condition of the industry; and luxury vs. staple character of crops.

9. Tactics -- the day-to-day implementation of policy -- cannot be dealt with in detail in an advance plan. Local arms of the organizing drive, however, should be prepared to act in such ways as job-finding, social and recreational activities, fund-raising, and direct services to members and their families: credit unions, housing bureaus, health and welfare cases, etc. Concentration upon membership should follow, and flow from, such activities, rather than precede them or be carried on independently of them.

10. An organization which intended to support the farm labor movement in a responsible manner should expect to have to spend about \$200,000 a year, for at least two years, in county-wide or regional organizing projects; perhaps \$1 million a year, for at least as long, on statewide projects. To cover the entire country would not be so expensive, nor take so long, as this might suggest. If organization were successful in any major agricultural state, such as California, political and other barriers would crumble at a geometric pace. The union could be nationwide in less than a decade.

* * * *

Finally, we ventured the conclusion that agricultural workers are not, and should not be, so eager for their union that they accept aid from, or permit themselves to be taken over by, every and any force which avows that it, too, is for unionism. They should insist on their commitments to democratic values, to honor, to just means as well as just ends. Of the several forces from which future support for the farm labor movement might come, the Industrial Union Department of the AFL-CIO appears to have the most to commend it. Whether it can and will move into the present vacuum before the Teamsters union or some other force does, only the events of the next few weeks and months will tell.

Above all else, the agricultural workers should demand some effective voice in the decisions by which one or another organization establishes a farm labor organizing committee, and hammers out its structure, strategy, and answers the other types of grounding questions suggested in this paper. Agricultural workers should insist from the very beginning, and demonstrate by their actions, that they are not peons (which means "pawns") but are men of inherent dignity like other men, and intend to be treated as such.

This, after all, is what it means to build a union.